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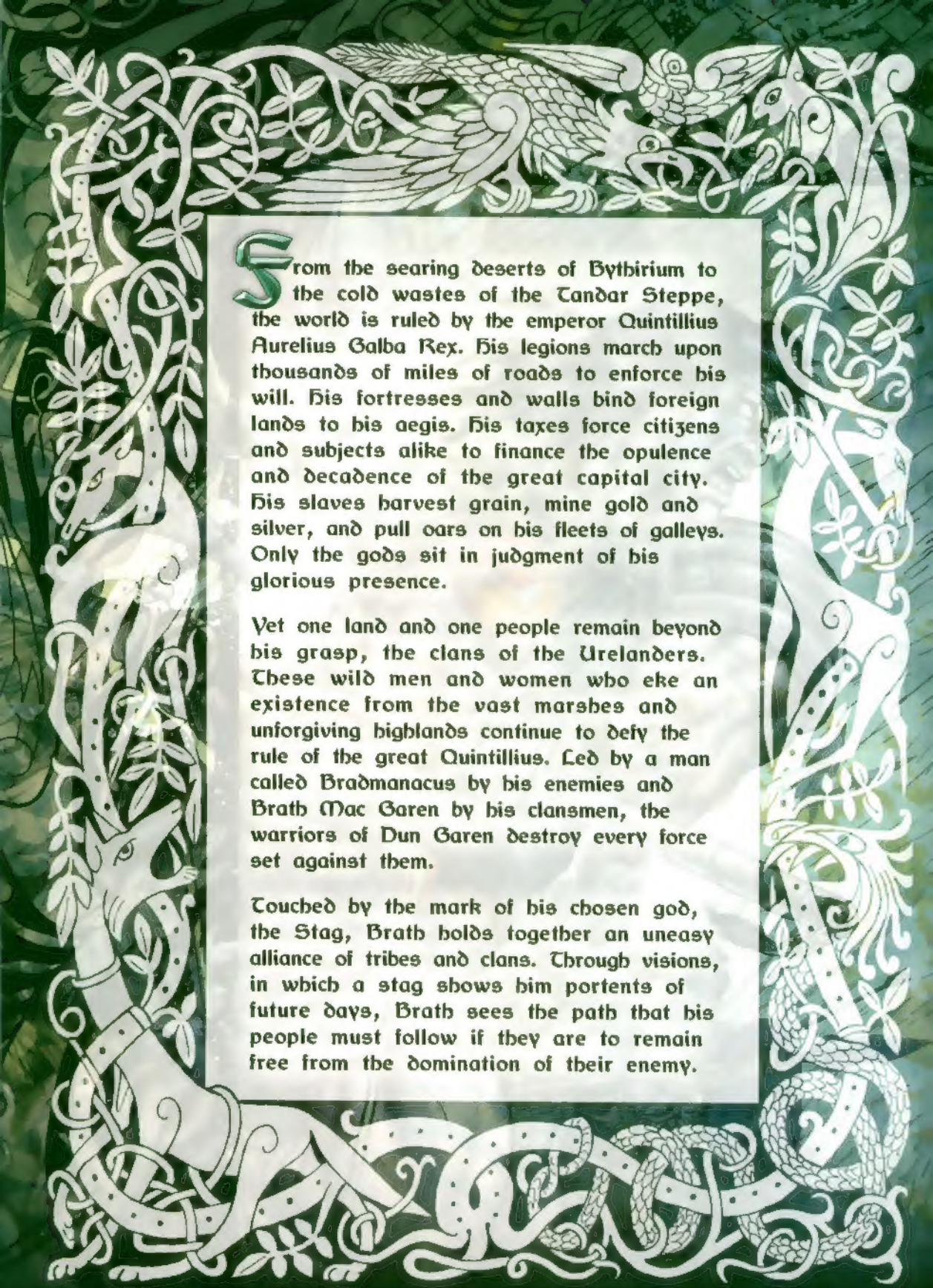
BRATH
PREQUEL
Chuck Dixon · Andrea Di Vito · Brad Vancata · Rob Schwager



From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe, the world is ruled by the emperor Quintillius Aurelius Galba Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. His taxes force citizens and subjects alike to finance the opulence and decadence of the great capital city. His slaves harvest grain, mine gold and silver, and pull oars on his fleets of galleys. Only the gods sit in judgment of his glorious presence.

Yet one land and one people remain beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the rule of the great Quintillius. Led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen destroy every force set against them.

Touched by the mark of his chosen god, the Stag, Brath holds together an uneasy alliance of tribes and clans. Through visions, in which a stag shows him portents of future days, Brath sees the path that his people must follow if they are to remain free from the domination of their enemy.

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LOCK SHIELDS! LINE STEADY!
NOT ONE STEP BACK!
A HILLOCK IN THE NORTH OF IRISIUM IN THE THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF QUINTILLIUS GALBA.

MY NAME IS ANTONIUS CASTA.
THIRTEENTH LEGION. FOURTH MANIPLE. FIRST CENTURY. SIXTH COHORT.
WE ARE A WALL, RHINOS!
THOSE TRIPE-EATING SWINE CANNOT BREAK A LEGION WALL!
BEHIND US AUXILIARY FROM ARABICA PREPARE THEIR SLINGS OF KID LEATHER.
IN THE REAR, ARCHERS FROM THE FAR PROVINCES OF CYTHIA STRING THEIR BOWS OF SINEW AND HORN.

TO OUR FRONT, OVER THE TOP OF THE HILLOCK, WE SEE THE DUST OF OUR ENEMIES.
WE HEAR THE BATTLEHORNS OF THE WILDMEN OF IRISIUM.
THEY ARE THE TRIBES FROM THE FORESTS NORTH OF THE CLAVIUM WALL.
THEY HAVE NOT YET KNELT TO THE POWER OF OUR EMPEROR-GOD.

AT THEIR HEAD RIDES THEIR WARCHIEF.

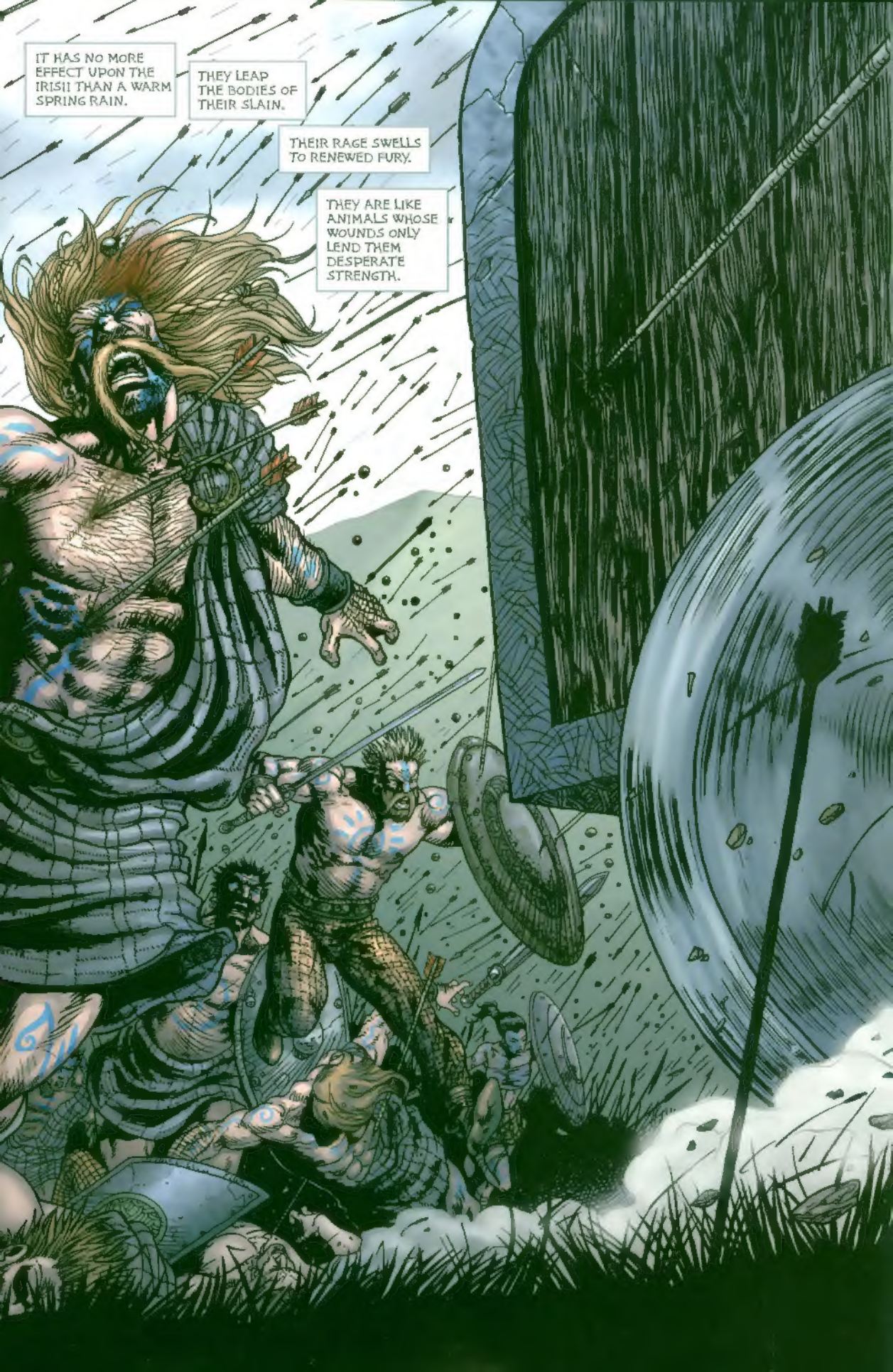
IT IS HE WHO UNITED THE FREE CLANS TO OPPOSE THE WILL OF THE SENATE AND CITIZENS OF THE EMPIRE.

BRATH MAC GAREN, CALLED IN OUR TONGUE BRADMANACUS.

THE HAMMER OF URE.

MANKILLER.

THE SHRIEK OF THE WILDMAN DEAFENS US.
IT IS A HOWL BORN OF HATRED.
GODS AND DEVILS...
IT NEARLY DROWNS THE SHOUTS OF MY DECURION.
RAISE THAT SHIELD, YOU MOTHERLESS WHORESON!
THE ARABICAN LOOSE THEIR LEAD MISSILES.
EACH CARVED WITH AN IMPRECATION TO THE GODS.
A GREAT HUM TELLS THAT THE CYTHIANS HAVE SENT THEIR ARROWS SKYWARD.
THEY FALL LIKE STEEL RAIN UPON OUR FOE.


IT HAS NO MORE EFFECT UPON THE IRISH THAN A WARM SPRING RAIN.
THEY LEAP THE BODIES OF THEIR SLAIN.
THEIR RAGE SWELLS TO RENEWED FURY.
THEY ARE LIKE ANIMALS WHOSE WOUNDS ONLY LEND THEM DESPERATE STRENGTH.

FIRST JAVELINS, LADS!
JAVELINS UP!
OUR PILA TAKE A DEADLY TOLL ON THOSE IN THE FRONT RANKS.
THE SECOND VOLLEY SLAYS EVEN MORE.
BRATH BELLOWS IN HIS ANIMAL TONGUE.
HIS WORDS GALVANIZE HIS CLANSMEN TO FRESH RAGE.

THEIR MOMENTUM IS HARDLY SLOWED BY THE BARRIER OF OUR SHIELDS.
THE COHORT WAVERS AND A BLOODY BREACH OPENS IN THE RANKS.
IT IS A GAP THAT REFUSES TO CLOSE DESPITE THE MATCHED FURY OF OUR DECURIONS AND OPTIOS.

SOON ALL IS CHAOS AS THE IRISIANS BLUDGEON A WOUND IN THE DEFENSES OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

BRATH MAC GAREN SHOUTS ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS CLANSMEN

HORROR IS HEAPED ON HORROR AS THE RHYTHMIC SOUND ROARING FROM THE THROATS OF THE WILDMEN TAKES FORM.

THEY ARE SINGING.

THE FIRST CENTURY BLEEDS.
THE FIRST CENTURY BREAKS.
AND THE TERROR SPREADS TO THE ENTIRE SIXTH COHORT.
THE MIGHTY AND FEARLESS BRATH CLAWS THE GUTS FROM THE LEGION.
DITH A'AR TURA!

FORM UP! FORM UP!

OUR DECURION SHOUTS ORDERS THEY ARE ECHOED BY OPTIOS UP AND DOWN THE RANKS

THEY GO UNHEARD OVER THE CLASH OF STEEL AND SCREAMS OF THE DYING.

AND IN AN INSTANT-

UNNH!

ALL IS LOST.

OUR LINE OF BATTLE TURNS TO CHAOTIC MELEE

AND THE IRISIANS ARE AMONG US WITH IMPUNITY

A WILDMAN TAKES UP OUR FALLEN BANNER.
THE PRIDE OF THE RHINOS BECOMES A MOCKERY
HE HOWLS IN VICTORY LIKE A WOLF OVER FALLEN PREY.
RAGE FLOODS IN TO DISPLACE THE FEAR IN MY HEART.
THE THIRTEENTH WILL NOT FALL THIS WAY.

RHINOS!
FORM ON ME! FORM A SQUARE!
BUT NONE HEAR MY COMMANDS
THEY HAVE SEEN THEIR LEADERS FALL AND NONE WILL HEAR MY CRIES.

MY SHOUTS ONLY DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THE IRISIANS.

THEY CLOSE ABOUT ME AS MIGHT A PACK OF DOGS.

AND I AM BROUGHT LOW.

MY MIND RETURNS FROM A DARK PLACE.

I AWAKEN TO THE ROLL OF THEIR GROWLING TONGUES.

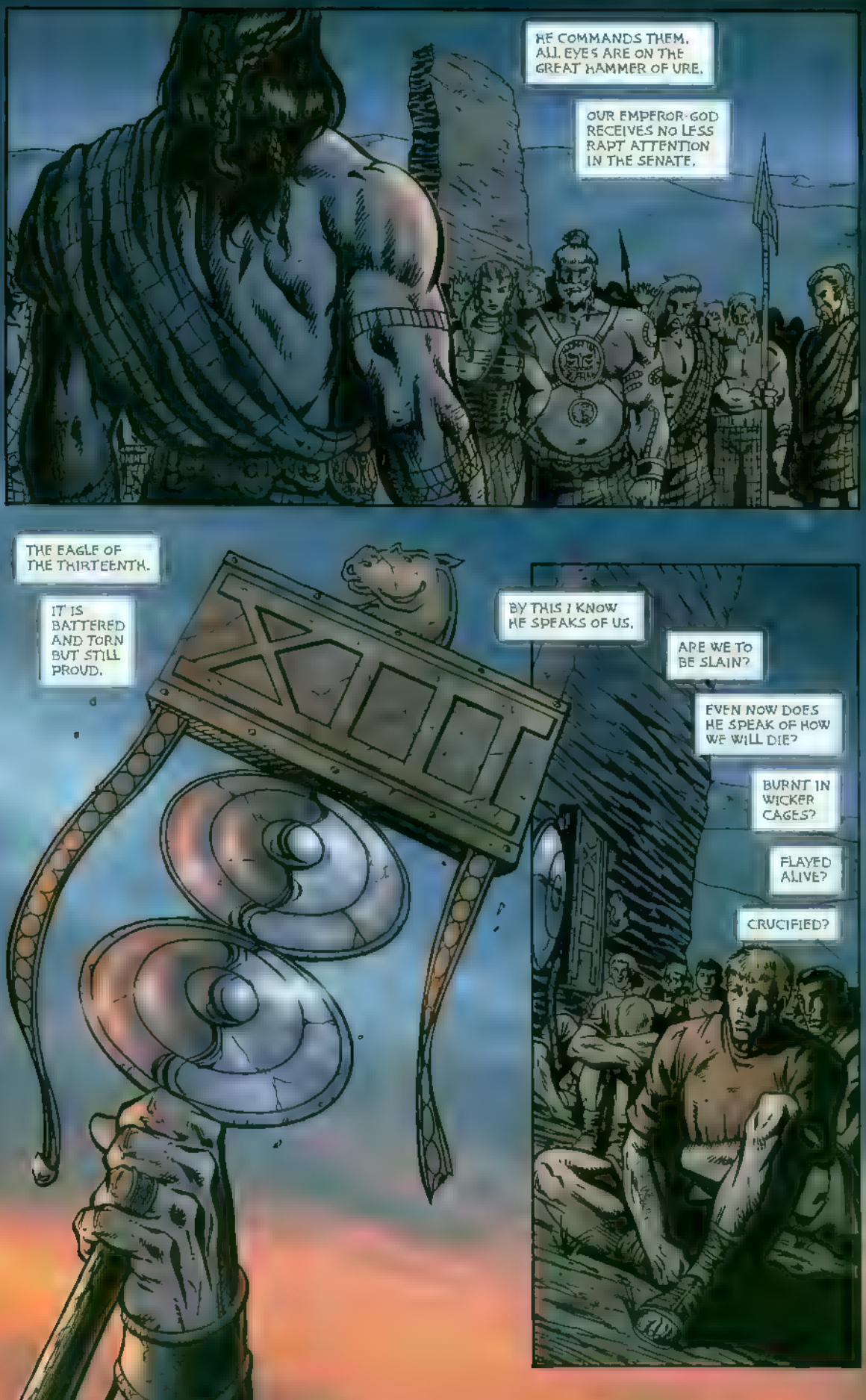
THEY SPEAK TO EACH OTHER IN THAT OBSCENE SNARL OF WORDS.

THEIR WARCHIEF IS HERE. MANKILLER BRADMANACUS.

FOR A MOMENT I IMAGINE I MIGHT BE DEAD AND THAT MY SPIRIT WILL BE JOINED FOREVER TO MY ENEMIES

THEN PAIN RETURNS AND I KNOW THAT I LIVE.

THE ELDEST TESTS THE MUSCLE OF MY ARM.
HE CHATTERS AS A MONKEY I SAW IN THE MARKETPLACE AS A CHILD.
BRATH MAC GAREN IS IN DISCUSSION WITH BROTHER WARRIORS.
THE TONE IS STERN. I SENSE A FEELING OF UNEASE HERE
THE WARCHIEF BITES AT HIS COARSE WORDS.
HIS WORD IS THE LAST WORD.
WHATEVER DISSENSION IS IN HIS COMPANY HE HAS QUELLED IT.


HE COMMANDS THEM. ALL EYES ARE ON THE GREAT HAMMER OF URE.
OUR EMPEROR-GOD RECEIVES NO LESS RAPT ATTENTION IN THE SENATE.
THE EAGLE OF THE THIRTEENTH.
IT IS BATTERED AND TORN BUT STILL PROUD.
XIII
BY THIS I KNOW HE SPEAKS OF US.
ARE WE TO BE SLAIN?
EVEN NOW DOES HE SPEAK OF HOW WE WILL DIE?
BURNT IN WICKER CAGES?
FLAYED ALIVE?
CRUCIFIED?

THE TRIBE BOWS TO THE JUDGMENT PLACED UPON US.
IT IS WITH GRUDGING ACCEPTANCE
STRANGEST OF ALL, THE WARRIOR KING OF THE IRISIANS SMILES AT THE SURVIVORS OF THE THIRTEENTH.
THERE IS MUCH IN THAT SIMPLE EXPRESSION.
BUT I SENSE NO MENACE
HIS WRATH IS SAVED FOR HIS TRIBESMEN.
TO THEM HE PRESENTS A COLD WARRIOR'S FACE

FALBH.

FALBH DACHAIDH

IT IS THEN I KNOW WE ARE TO BE RELEASED.

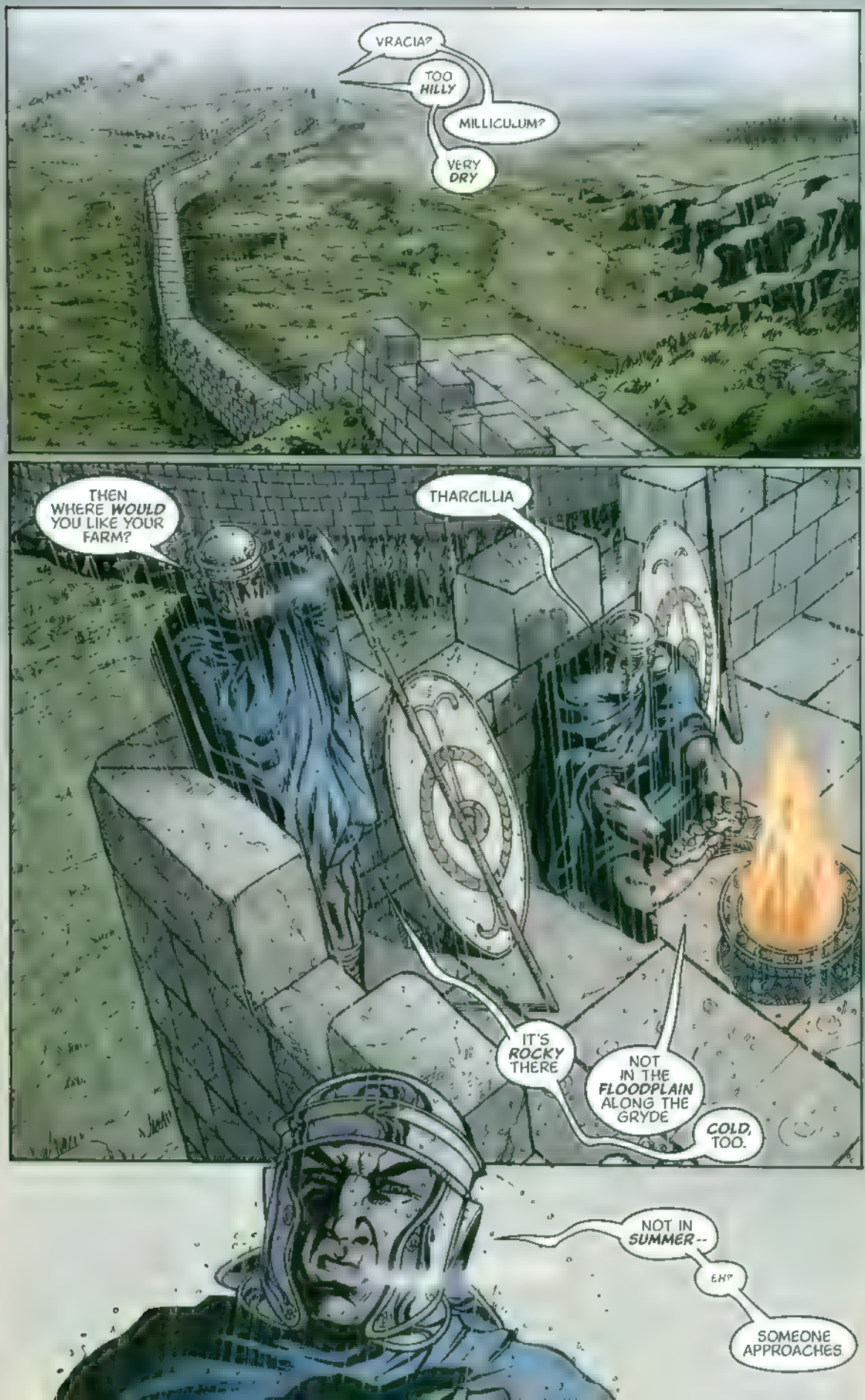
GIN'SAMBITH DOL SIB AIMHLEAS.

BY HIS WILL ALONE ARE WE FREE

THE BALEFUL GLARES OF HIS CLANSMEN CAUSE US TO LOOK AWAY.

BUT NOT A BLADE OR FIST OR SPEAR IS LIFTED AGAINST US.

AND WE MAKE OUR WAY SOUTH TO BRUNDUGNUM AND THE WALL


VRACIA?
TOO HILLY
MILLICULUM?
VERY DRY
THEN WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR FARM?
THARCILLIA
IT'S ROCKY THERE
NOT IN THE FLOODPLAIN ALONG THE GRYDE
COLD, TOO.
NOT IN SUMMER--
EH?
SOMEONE APPROACHES

LEGIONNAIRES!
THE THIRTEENTH!
THE BLOODY THIRTEENTH!

SO, THIS IS ALL THAT'S LEFT, IS IT?

OF AN ENTIRE LEGION, A MERE HANDFUL OF MEN AND A TORN BANNER?

YOU SAY THE CHIEFTAIN *RELEASED* YOU AND THE OTHERS?

YES, GENERAL VALA.

AND RESTORED TO YOU THE *EAGLE* OF THE THIRTEENTH?

I SENSED THIS MADE HIM *UNPOPULAR* WITH HIS TRIBESMEN.

COWARDS. YOU SHOULD HAVE FOUGHT TO THE *LAST*.

THEY VERY NEARLY *DID*, TRIBUNE DRUSUS.

OF EIGHTY CENTURIES, THERE ARE BUT A *HUNDRED MEN* OR SO THAT SURVIVE. THEY ACQUITED THEMSELVES BRAVELY *ENOUGH*.

THAT EVEN THESE LIVE IS AN EMBARASSMENT TO THE DIVINE GALBA.

I'M CERTAIN *EVEN* THE EMPEROR WILL RECOGNIZE THEIR HEROISM.

GO NOW AND REST, SON. YOU'VE *DONE* YOUR DUTY FOR NOW

AND THE THIRTEENTH?

IT IS NO *MORE*.

SON...

GENERAL.

WHY DO *YOU* THINK THE BARBARIAN LORD LET YOU LEAVE RATHER THAN KILL YOU OUTRIGHT?

BECAUSE HE KNEW IT WAS MORE *HUMILIATING* TO LET US LIVE

AND WE BEAR *WITNESS* TO HIS VICTORY

BRADMANACUS. BRATH MAC GAREN.

AN OUTLAND PIG. WE SHALL HAVE HIS HEAD IN A *WEEK*.

I WOULD NOT *RUSH* TO THAT CONCLUSION, DRUSUS.

THESE HILLMEN AND PEATCUTTERS *CANNOT* STAND FOR LONG.

THOSE WE DO NOT BUY WE WILL *SCARE*. THOSE WE DO NOT SCARE WE WILL *KILL*

AS WE DID WITH THE AREMANNI AND THE BELGAE?

JUST THE SAME. AND NOW THEY ARE LOYAL SUBJECTS OF MERCIFUL GALBA

THEY CANNOT BUT *BOW* TO OUR MIGHT

GRANTED, THEY ARE A *FEROCIOUS* LOT. BUT I FEEL OUR BLOODIEST DAYS ARE *BEHIND* US.

DO YOU? YOU WOULD *SPEND* A LEGION THAT CHEAPLY?

I DO NOT THINK ALL WILL GO AS IT HAS *BEFORE*, DRUSUS.

"I HAVE A SOLDIER'S INTUITION THAT *THIS* CAMPAIGN MIGHT BE DIFFERENT"

"BRATH!"

"BRATH!"

THE *DREAM* AGAIN, BRATH?

AYE.

THE STAG?

AYE. AND *MORE.*

A *CITY.* BIG ENOUGH TO HOLD A *HUNDRED* CLAN MAC GARENS.

A *THOUSAND.*

IS IT DAYS TO *COME* YOU SEE?

NO. IT IS THE CITY OF OUR ENEMIES AS IT IS *TODAY.*

SHINING, CLEAN, AND INVINCIBLE.

LIKE A BLADE HONED TO A FINE EDGE AND POISED AT OUR HEARTS.

STORYTELLERS

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ANDREA·DI VITO·*PENCILER*

BRAD·VANCATA·*INKER*

ROB·SCHWAGER·*COLORIST*

DAVE·LANPHEAR·*LETTERER*

DEDICATED TO JOHN BUSCEMA,
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
THE GREATEST "MAESTRO".

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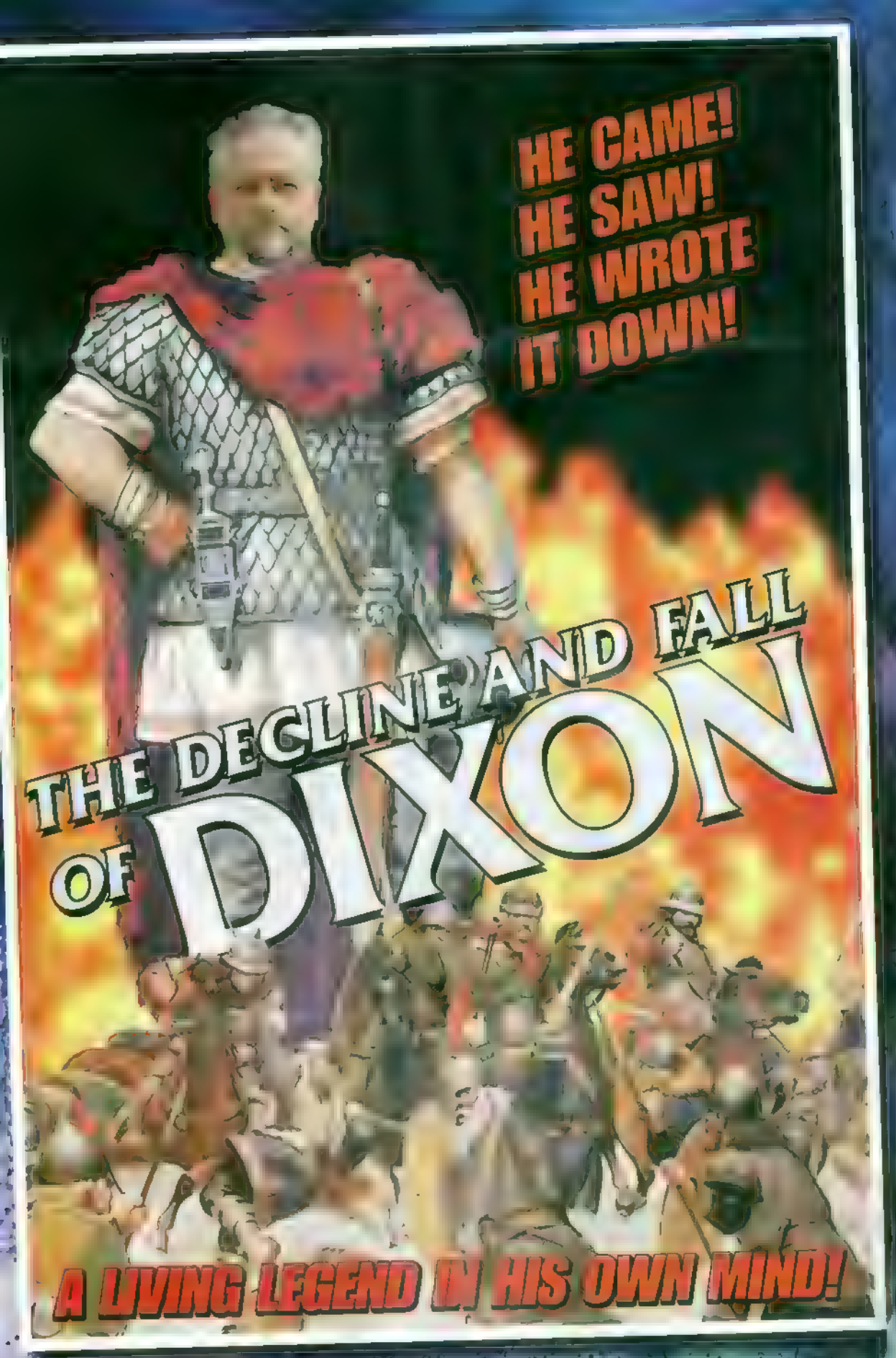


Brath Prequel

PAGE TWELVE

SPLASH
Brath leaps from his chariot with his axe swinging and takes down two soldiers. A Roman helmet goes flying. Galpal pulls the reins in and slows the chariot while throwing another spear.

BRATH: *DITH A'AR TURA!*
CAPTION: THE FIRST CENTURY BLEEDS.
CAPTION: THE FIRST CENTURY BREAKS.
CAPTION: AND THE TERROR SPREADS TO THE ENTIRE SIXTH COHORT.
CAPTION: THE MIGHTY AND FEARLESS BRATH CLAWS THE GUTS FROM THE LEGION.

WITH NOTHING BUT A PENCIL, HE MOVED THE EARTH!

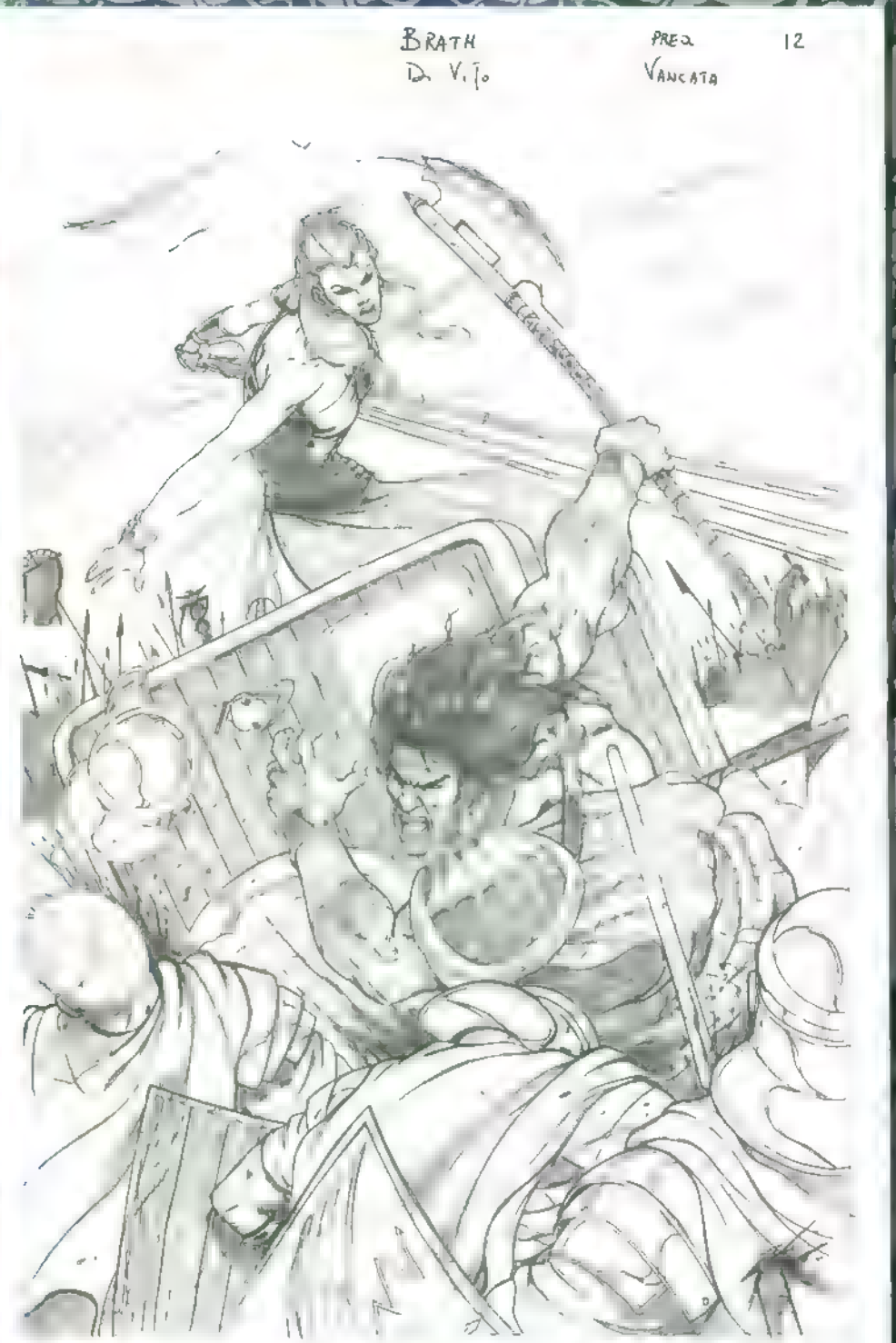
ANDREA CONQUERS THE WORLD

Women Desired Him!

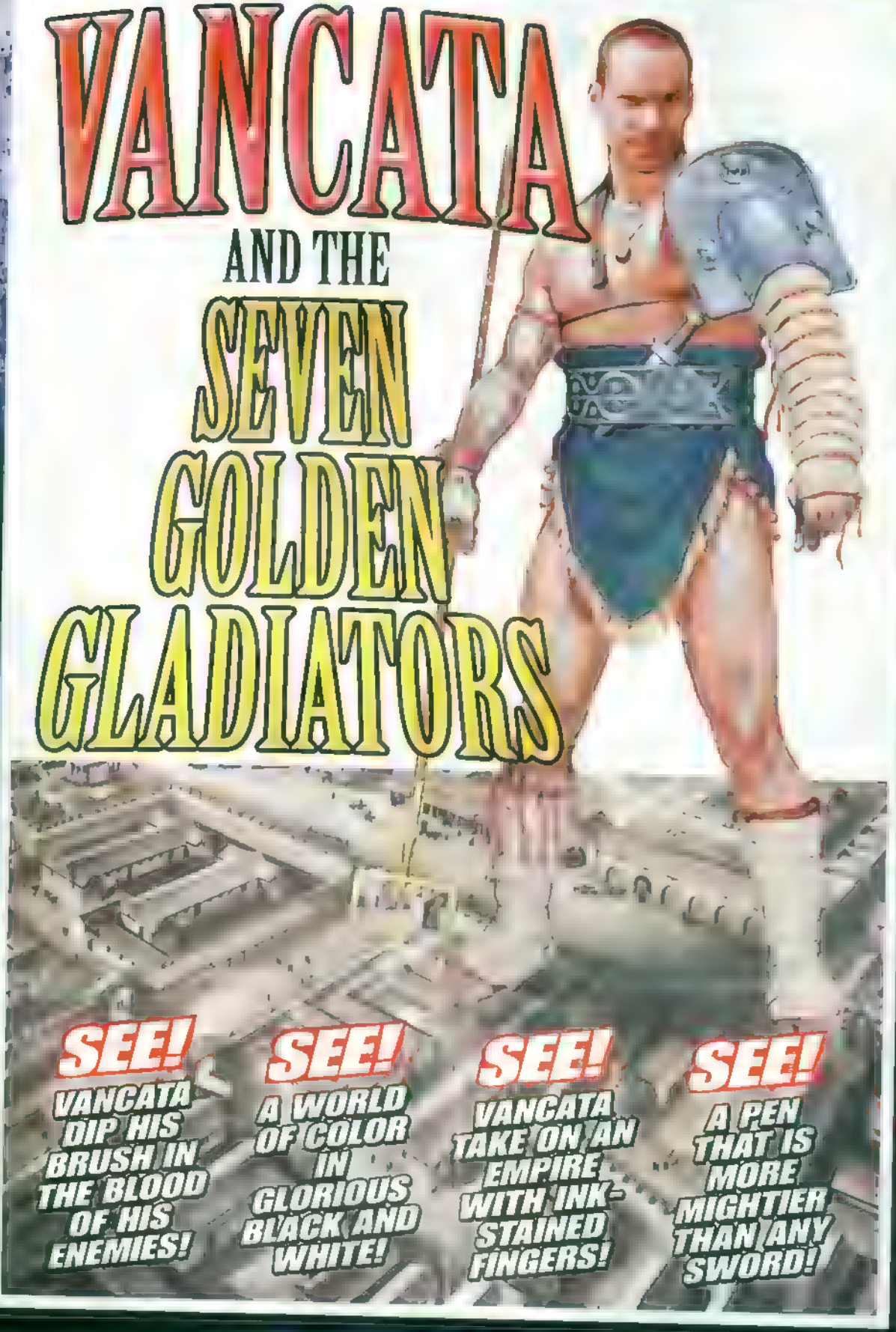
Men Feared Him!

Animals Were Indifferent!

HE'D CRUSH THEM ALL BENEATH HIS SANDALS AND LAUGH!



VANCATA AND THE SEVEN GOLDEN GLADIATORS


SEE!
VANCATA DIP HIS BRUSH IN THE BLOOD OF HIS ENEMIES!
SEE!
A WORLD OF COLOR IN GLORIOUS BLACK AND WHITE!
SEE!
VANCATA TAKE ON AN EMPIRE WITH INK-STAINED FINGERS!
SEE!
A PEN THAT IS MORE MIGHTIER THAN ANY SWORD!

THE SEVEN LABORS OF SCHWAGER

GASP!
AS SCHWAGER STRUGGLES AFTER THE DEADLY DEADLINE!

SCREAM!
AS A SINGLE KEYSTROKE DESTROYS A DAY'S WORK!

CRINGE!
AS HE COMES TO WORK WITHOUT HIS PANTS!

PRESENTED IN
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Touched by the mark of his chosen god, the Stag, Brath holds together an uneasy alliance of tribes and clans. Through visions, in which a stag shows him portents of future days, Brath sees the path that his people must follow if they are to remain free from the domination of their enemy. Brath has destroyed the Emperor's XIIIth Legion and sent the survivors back to their fort in humiliation. This only serves to fuel the rage of the Domnian legionaries.

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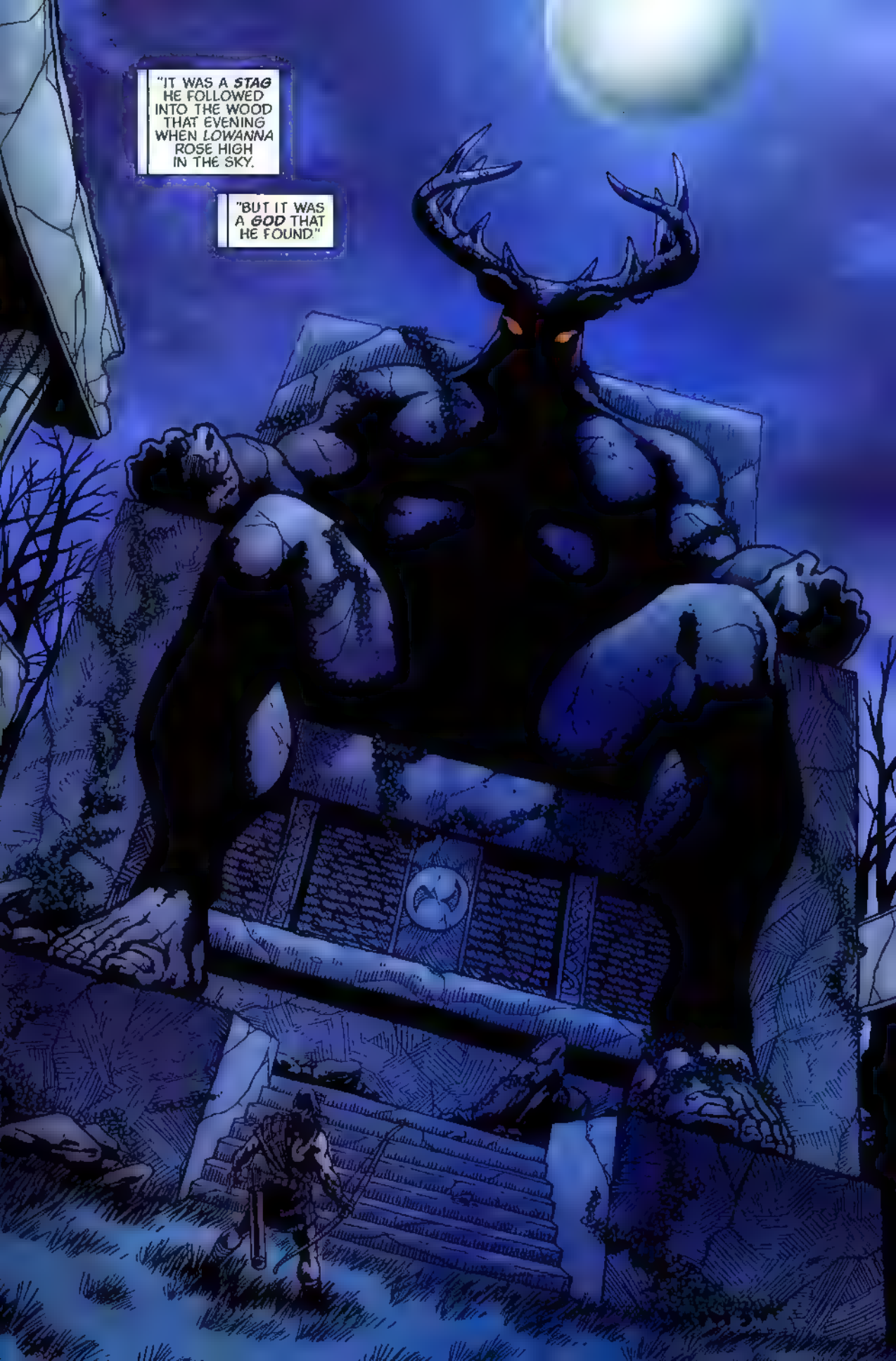

"IT WAS A *STAG* HE FOLLOWED INTO THE WOOD THAT EVENING WHEN *LOWANNA* ROSE HIGH IN THE SKY.
"BUT IT WAS A *GOD* THAT HE FOUND."

"BRATH MAC GAREN WAS *FIRST* IN HIS CLAN.

"HE *FEARED* NO MAN NOR BEAST

"THIS WAS A *GOD*.

'AND BRATH KNEW *TERROR* THAT NIGHT.

"HE HAD *NAUGHT* TO FEAR

"THE STAG GOD HAD CHOSEN HIM FOR A *GIFT*

'HE MARKED BRATH WITH A *SACRED SIGN*

"THIS SIGN WOULD *LEAD* CLAN GAREN AS THE MOON LEADS THE TIDES.

'AND *THAT* IS THE STORY OF YOUR FATHER."

WILL *I* BE MARKED LIKE MY FATHER, S'MATH?

ONLY *FUTURE* DAYS WILL *TELL*, YOUNG BRYLLIN

YOU ARE A *MAGIC* MAN. YOU CAN SEE WHAT WILL COME.

NOT *ALL* IS CLEAR.

ONLY THAT YOUR FATHER WILL *LEAD* US AGAINST THE OUTLANDERS.

HE IS OUR *ONLY* HOPE TO KEEP URE FREE FROM THEIR STAIN.

I WILL GROW TO BE A MAN!

I WILL STAND *BY* HIM AND KILL OUR ENEMIES!

AYE THERE WILL *STILL* BE MUCH FIGHTING TO BE DONE

SO MANY MEN MUST GO TO *WAR*

SO MANY MEN MUST *DIE*--

"AND BRATH OF CLAN GAREN STANDS *TWIXT* THE TWO."

--BEFORE THE *GODS* ARE SATISFIED.

BROTHERS AND COUSINS, CLAN ALL...

ARROWS TO HAND..

AND PULL..

..AND LET FLY!

THE BLUE-PAINTED SWINE ARE AT IT *AGAIN!*

IS IT A *FULL* ATTACK, OPTIO?

NOTHING FOR THEM TO *STEAL* HERE! PROBABLY JUST A--

-NO SANCE

GODS AND DEVILS...

NOW, WHILE THEY'RE *REELING!*

GIVE THEM NO *TIME* TO RECOVER!

AS WE *PLANNED!* AS I *TOLD* YOU!

'LIKE *ANIMALS*. NOT LIKE MEN

"THESE OUTLANDERS ARE *DISCIPLINED*. AND ORDER SERVES THEM *WELL*

"BUT ORDER *ALONE* IS NEVER ENOUGH.

'AGAINST OUR BESTIAL FEROCITY WHAT DO THEY *HAVE?*

"THEY ARE *SOLDIERS*. NOT WARRIORS.

"AND THAT WILL BE THEIR *END*.

THAT IS HOW WE WILL END THEIR *INVASION*, BRATH.

AYE. AGAINST *ANOTHER* ENEMY I WOULD AGREE.

BUT WE WILL NEED *MORE* THAN BRUTE STRENGTH THIS TIME, TANIELLA.

IN ADDITION TO ORDER THEY HAVE *NUMBERS*.

AND EVEN WITH *ALL* THE CLANS MARCHING AS ONE WE CANNOT MATCH THEM

LET THEM COME LET THEM *DIE*

WHAT DOES THIS *SERVE*, BRATH MAC GAREN?

YOU CALLED US FROM DUN DOOL FOR *THIS* POOR SLAUGHTER?

YOU ARE *DISPLEASED*, A DAN MAC DOOL?

AYE. WHAT *BOUNTY* IS THERE TO SHOW FOR THIS RAID?

A *CART* LOADED WITH *ROCKS*. I GOT *PLENTY* O'ROCKS ON ME LANDS AND I LEAVE 'EM WHERE THEY *LAY*

YOU GREAT *TWIT*. I'LL --

SEE THIS *ROAD*, MAC DOOL? IT LEADS *BACK* TO THE CITY THESE SOLDIERS CAME FROM.

NOW WHY D'YOU THINK THEY'RE GOING TO ALL THE TROUBLE TO *BUILD* A ROAD TO URELAND?

SO THEY CAN *COME* HERE, Y BLOODY *IDIOT*

SO THEY CAN *STAY* HERE, MAC DOOL

UH?

THIS ROAD IS A *DAGGER* AIMED AT *ALL* OUR HEARTS.

WE *STOP* THEM BUILDING THE ROAD AND WE *BLUNT* THAT DAGGER.

YOU'RE A *CUNNING* ONE, MAC GAREN.

CLAN MAC DOOL WILL *STAND* WITH YOU.

HE'S LYING

I KNOW

A'DAN AND HIS COUSINS WILL *TURN* FROM US AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE OR WANT

FATHER! IS THE BATTLE WON?

BRYLLIN!

THE DAY IS *OURS*, LAD.

YOU LEFT NO OUTLANDERS FOR *ME* TO SLAY?

YOU WERE TO STAY WITH THE *WAGONS*.

ISN'T SMATH *WATCHING* YOU?

HE IS PICKING ELDERBERRIES AND DIDN'T *SEE* ME LEAVE.

YOU MUST STAY WHERE IT'S *SAFE*, SON.

YOUR MOTHER *WORRIES*.

BUT YOU DON'T WORRY, *DO* YOU, FATHER?

ABOUT A SEASONED WARRIOR LIKE *YOU?*

NEVER.

THE BOY.. HE OUTSHINES THE *SUN* IN BRATH'S EYES.

A *BEAUTIFUL* BOY, IS HE NOT...

ADMIRED EVEN BY THE *GODS*. .

AS *DEAR* TO BRATH AND HIS BRIDE AS THEIR VERY HEARTS..

PRAYING TO YOUR *GODS*, SAVAL?

THEY ARE AS *DEAF* TO YOU AS YOU ARE *BLIND*.

IF YOU AWAIT MY PLEAS FOR *MERCY*, OUTLANDER --

-- YOU WAIT IN *VAIN*.

I ONLY WISH THAT YOU TELL ME THE LOCATION OF THE ENCAMPMENT OF BRADMANACUS --

-- THE ONE YOU CALL *BRATH* OF CLAN MAC GAREN

GIVE ME WHAT I WISH AND YOU WILL BE *RELEASED* TO YOUR PRECIOUS FOREST

DEFY ME --

-- AND I WILL TAKE FAR MORE THAN YOUR *EYES*.

YOU ARE A *WISE* MAN, SAVAL? A *LEARNED* MAN?

CAN YOU EVEN *READ* WRITTEN WORDS, WISE MAN?

I CAN READ THE *STARS*, OUTLANDER

I CAN SEE *YOUR* FATE THERE AND IT IS NOT A PRETTY ONE

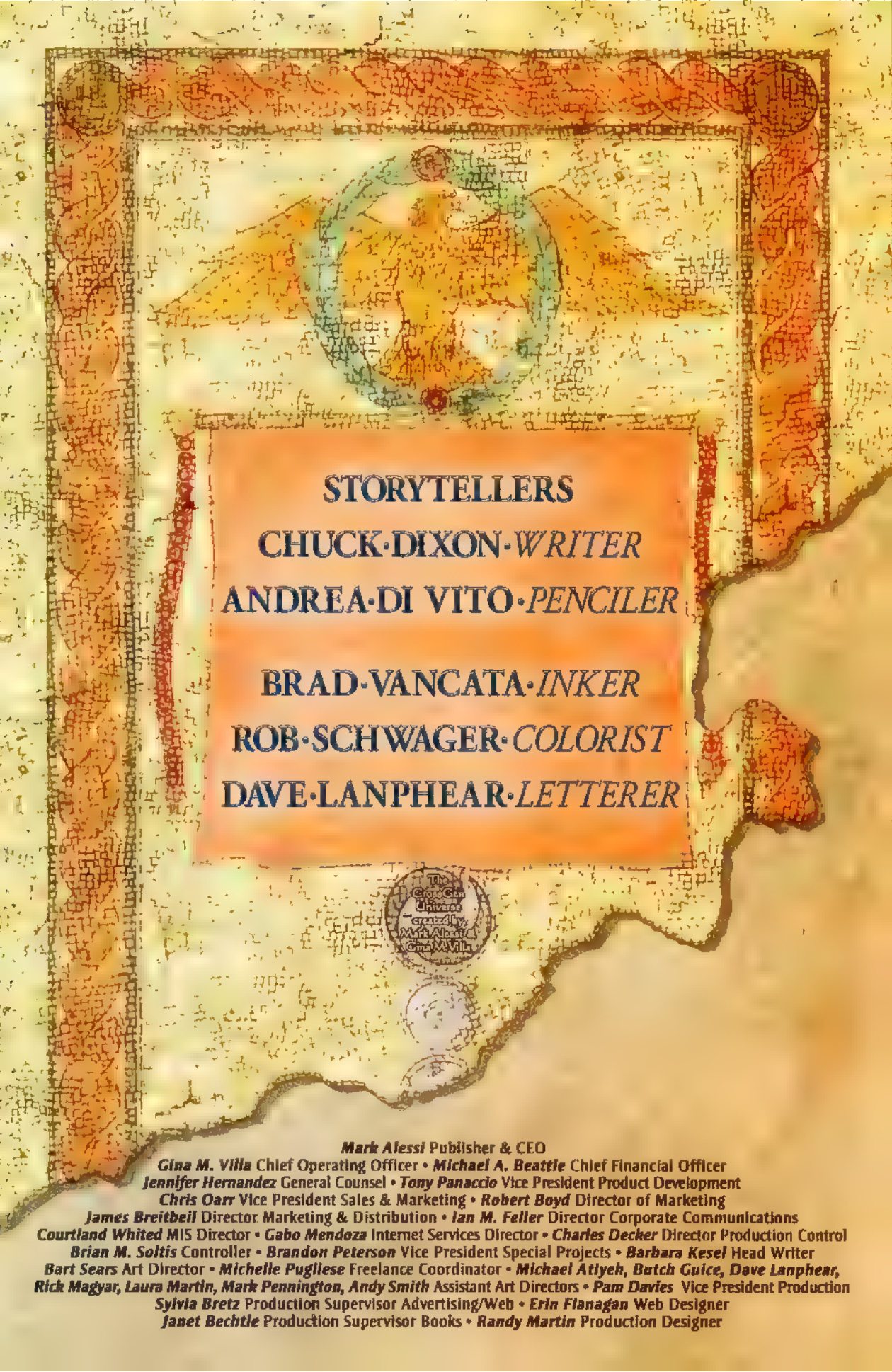
DAMN YOUR TONGUE!

LET THE BRUIN *HAVE* HIM!

NO SCREAMS

EVEN AT THE *END* THE PRIEST REMAINS TIRESOME

DRUSUS.
WHO--?
GENERAL VALA
WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PRIEST?
NOTHING OF *USE*
SO--A *WASTED* EXERCISE THEN.
YOU *DISAPPROVE* OF MY METHODS THEN?
TORTURE *STAINS* A SOLDIER'S HONOR
IT IS NOT SOLDIERS WE FACE BUT *BEASTS*.
THEY LIVE *ONLY* AT OUR PLEASURE THEY WILL *DIE* THE SAME WAY



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BRATH
Chuck Dixon
Andrea Di Vito
John Dell
Rob Schwager

From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe, the world is ruled by the Domnian emperor Quintillius Aurelius Galba Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. His taxes force citizens and subjects alike to finance the opulence and decadence of the great capital city. His slaves harvest grain, mine gold and silver, and pull oars on his fleets of galleys. Only the gods sit in judgment of his glorious presence.

Yet one land and one people remain beyond his grasp: the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the throne of the great Quintillius. Led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen destroy every force set against them.

Touched by the mark of his chosen god, the Stag, Brath holds together an uneasy alliance of tribes and clans. Through visions, in which a stag shows him portents of future days, Brath sees the path that his people must follow if they are to remain free from the domination of their enemy.

The Mac Garens, led by Brath, conduct lightning-strike raids on Imperial camps and road-building sites. Drusus, tribune to General Vala, uses torture and threats to divine the location of Dun Garen, the fortress of the rebellious clan and seat of Brath's power. Now, tensions between the united clans threaten to do what all the Emperor's legions have failed to accomplish.

Brath™ Vol. 1, Issue 2, APRIL 2003. FIRST PRINTING. Published by CG Entertainment, Inc. Office of publication: 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34677. **CrossGen®**, **CrossGen Comics®**, **CrossGeneration®**, **CrossGeneration Comics®**, and the **CrossGen sigil®** are registered trademarks of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. The **CG Entertainment logo™**, **Brath™** and all characters and images are Trademark and Copyright 2003 CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. The stories, incidents and characters in this publication are fictional. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGeneration Comics, Inc. PRINTED IN CANADA.

YOU'RE A
DEAD
MAN, BRATH
MAC GAREN!
ALL
THAT'S LEFT
IS THE TASK
O' KILLIN'
YOU!

YOU THINK TO TAKE MY *PLACE*, A'DAN MAC DOOL?

YOU THINK TO LEAD THE CLANS AGAINST THE OUTLANDERS?

THAT I *DO*, BRATH! I *CHALLENGE* YOUR RIGHT TO RULE.

ALL THIS *DUNG* ABOUT YOU BEIN' *FATED* TO BRING THE URE TO WAR!

IT'S ALL JUST *DUNG!*

THE MAC DOOLS ARE READY TO *WADE* INTO THE GUTS OF THEM THAT INVADE OUR FIELDS
THE CLANS NEED A MAN WITH *BLOOD* IN HIS VEINS, NOT *MILK!*
BLOOD IN YOUR *VEINS*, BUT NOT A BRAIN IN YOUR *SKULL!*
YOU MAC DOOLS ARE *ALL* THE SAME
EH?
THOSE RE YOUR *LAST* WORDS, MAC GAREN
YOUR *LAST!*

UNNH!
GAHH!
HUNH!
HAH!

I'M THE CHOSEN OF THE STAG, MAC DOOL
YOU'D LEAD THE CLANS TO DISASTER
TOUCHED BY THE GODS, ARE YOU?
THEN ALLOW ME TO SEND YOU TO 'EM!
PHUH!
GARRGH

IDIOT.
HE NEEDED KILLIN', COUSIN
AYE, R'HORAN, STILL, IT CAUSES BAD *BLOOD* BETWEEN THE CLANS.
WE'LL NEED ALL OF THE FAMILIES TO DEFEAT THE IRON HELMS.
HEE HEE!
THAT'S THE *BEST* Y'DROOLIN' MAC DOOLS HAVE T'OFFER?
YOU COULDNA LEAD FLIES TO A' *OFFAL* PIT!
SHUT YOUR *MOUTH*, OLD MAN!
OUR COUSIN FOUGHT AND *LOST*. WE'LL NOT HEAR HIS NAME *SLANDERED!* THE MAC DOOLS *HAVE* THEIR PRIDE!

THE COMBAT FAVORS *YOU*, BRATH. WE'LL *FOLLOW* YOU INTO BATTLE.
AN WHAT'S THE WORD OF A *MAC DOOL* WORTH?
QUIET, G'RANNICH
BUT SHOULD YOU *STUMBLE*. SHOULD WE TASTE *DEFEAT*.
THEN IT'S *I* YOU'LL FACE AT THE END OF A TETHER
FAIR *ENOUGH*, VINN MAC DOOL.
TIS ALL I MIGHT *ASK* OF YOU.

AN OATH FROM A MAC DOOL? PISH!
THE OLD GOAT IS RIGHT THEY'RE A SNAKEISH LOT.
I GAVE MY WORD. I CAN ONLY EXPECT THEY'LL STAND BY THEIRS
WORDS...
IN MY DAY WE'D SLAUGHTER 'EM TO A MAN
THEN MAKE A STEW OF 'EM AYE, THAT'S GOOD EATIN
HOW OLD IS YOUR GRANDFATHER?
NOBODY KNOWS, COUSIN
AND I THOUGHT HE WAS YOUR GRANDFATHER.
AND THE MAC DOOLS?
THEY'LL FUME AND FUSS AND DRINK THEMSELVES STUPID.
THEN THEY'LL FALL IN LINE BEHIND US AS ALWAYS

I'LL MAKE A SACRIFICE FOR GOOD FORTUNE IN *ANY* CASE, BRATH

ONE CAN NEVER HAVE TOO *MUCH* LUCK R'HORAN

I GO TO FIND MY *WIFE*. DUN GAREN IS IN *YOUR* CARE IN MY ABSENCE

CAREFUL CAREFUL
THE MISTLETOE MUST BE CUT JUST SO--
--WE MUST NOT DISTURB THE SPIRIT OF THE OAK
WHAT ABOUT MY SPIRIT, SMATH?
YOU WORK ME LIKE AN OX.
MAMA IS AN OX
HA HA!

THERE
OH.
BRATH!
MORE OF AN OX THAN A BIRD, TANIELLA
HEE!

AND WHAT WAS YOUR MORNING LIKE?
A TOUCH OF TROUBLE WITH THE MAC DOOLS.
AGAIN?
TCH.
YOU'RE BLEEDING.
IT'S NOT MINE.
THAT SORT OF TROUBLE.
WELL, HERE'S YOUR SPRIG, OLD ONE.
IT IS WORTH-LESS.
WITH THIS INSULT TO THE OAK THE SPIRIT HAS GONE FROM IT
NO PLEASING HIM, I TELL YOU.
BRING BRYLLIN AND COME BACK TO DUN GAREN. LET S'MATH PICK TWIGS ON HIS OWN--
ONLY I PROM--
BRATH OF THE MAC GARENS...
WHO--?

ONLY CINNTRA, BRAVE CHIEFTAIN..
I BRING YOU WORDS OF GREAT WEIGHT... WORDS HEAVY WITH PORTENT
HEEP! HEH HEEP!
WHAT DO YOU *WANT*, CRONE? I *HAVE* A HOLY MAN IN S'MATH.
THAT *FAKE*? HE KNOWS *LITTLE*. HE IS *DEAF* TO THE GREAT MOTHER-OF-ALL.
A *MAN* CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE WHISPERS OF THE WIND. THE *SECRETS* SPOKEN AS THE CREAKINGS OF BRANCHES.
DARK DAYS LIE *AHEAD*. YOU *KNOW* THIS, BRATH. THE *STAG* TELLS YOU SO.
AN *ENEMY* MARCHES ON US THEY WILL RIDE HORSES AS *TALL* AS A LODGE POLE
AND HE MAY ONLY BE WASHED AWAY IN *BLOOD*.
THE BLOOD OF *MEN*. THE BLOOD OF *WOMEN*.

BLOOD MORE PRECIOUS THAN BOTH
THERE WILL BE NO SACRIFICE OF MEN. NOT SLAVES NOR PRISONERS
THOSE DAYS ARE PAST
NO SLAVE WILL DO...IT MUST BE ONLY THE BLOOD OF ONE BELOVED...ONE TREASURED...
SHE IS MAD.
SOMETIMES THE SOFT OF BRAIN SEE WHAT WE CANNOT.
SHE SPEAKS TRUTH THEN?
WHO MAY KNOW
THE WORLD IS TURNED UPON ITS HEAD
SKY AND WATER EARTH AND STARS

HE IS LATE, TRIBUNE
WE DEAL WITH BARBARIANS. THEY EAT WHEN HUNGRY AND SLEEP WHEN THEY TIRE
THIS ONE APPEARS TO BE HUNGRY INDEED.

YOU ARE DRUSUS?
I AM THE TRIBUNE TALIMANICUS DRUSUS
AND YOU ARE--
--A'DAN MAC DOOL?
I AM HIS BROTHER VINN MAC DOOL
BUT TRUST THAT THE HATRED IN ME BONES FOR BRATH MAC GAREN BURNS JUST AS HOT
FAMILY IS SO IMPORTANT.
OF MAN AND WOMAN A UNION BORN--
UPON ITS HEAD A DARK MANE WORN--

BLOOD FOR DRINKING. FLESH FOR MEAT. ALL IS FOR THE GODS TO EAT.
FUTURE DAYS NOT YET COME. HOURS A'BORNING WITH THE SUN
MOON AND SUN. SEA AND STARS. HUNGRY HUNGRY GODS THERE ARE
BROKEN, CUT, MARROWED, AND BLED. HUNGRY HUNGRY MUST BE FED.

IS THIS *ANOTHER* OF YOUR FOOL'S ERRANDS?

FOR *IF* IT IS I'LL~

IT'S *NO* FOOLISHNESS, *IS* IT, BUCKIE?

NAY, DER. IS THE WORK OF *DEVILS*, IT IS.

THE IRON HELMS BRING A *DEMON* OUT OF HELL.

WHERE?

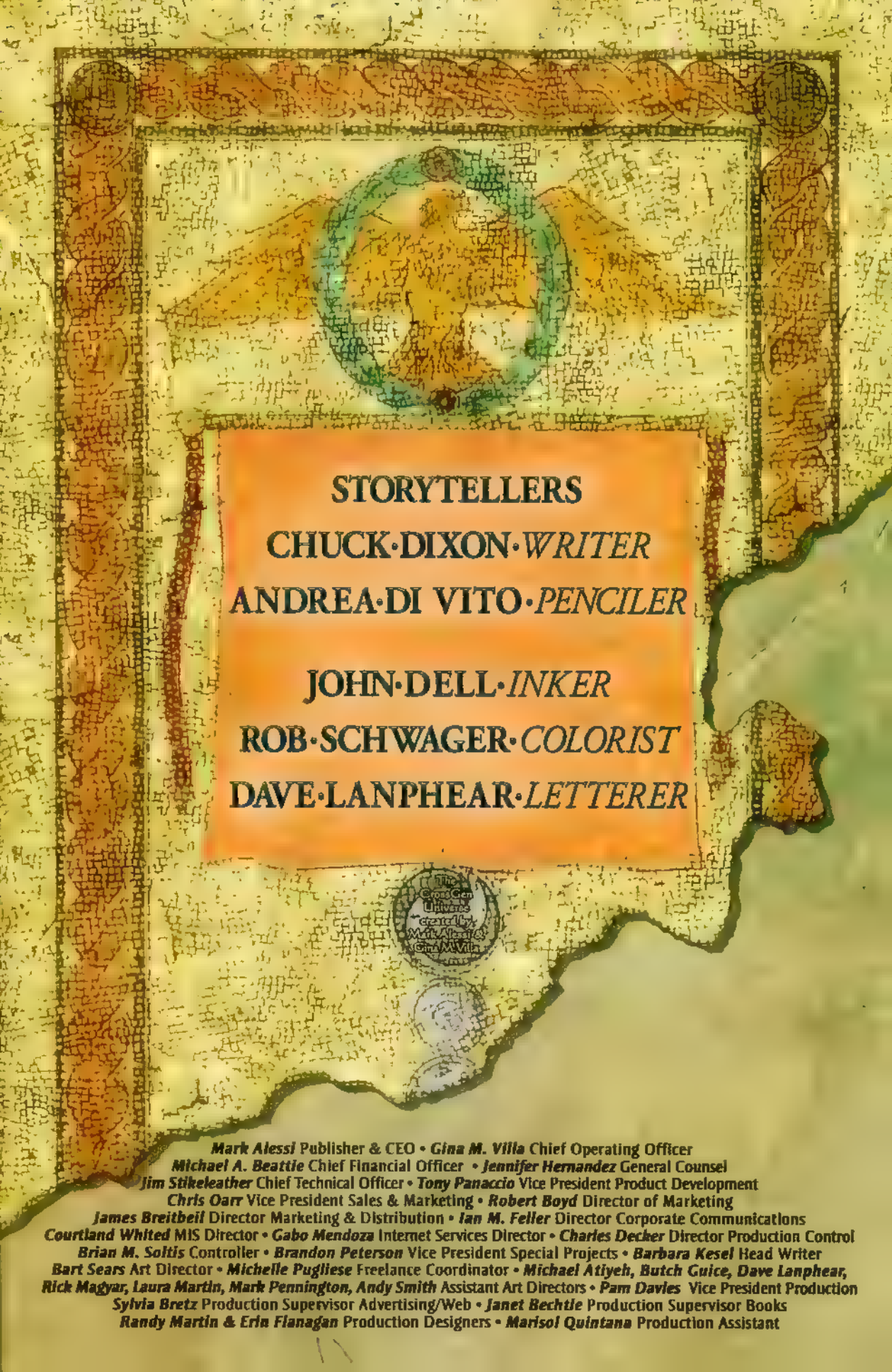
THERE, BRATH, UPON THE *WATER*

TELL ME THAT GREAT MONSTER IS *ANYTHIN'* BUT A DENIZEN OF THE DARKEST PIT.

A *BEASTIE* PART SNAKE AND PART BOAR AN' *FORTY* HANDS FOOT T'HEAD.

GODDESS OF THE MOON

"...ARE THERE MORE LIKE IT?"
HALF A HUNDRED, COUSIN.
THEY BEEN BOATIN' 'EM ASHORE ALL DAY, BRATH
WHAT ARE WE TO DO AGAINST SUCH CREATURES?
HORSES AS TALL AS A LODGE POLE



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The advance toward Dun Garen that Brath has seen in his dreams is now a reality. Vala and three legions march toward the hills that the Mac Garens call home.

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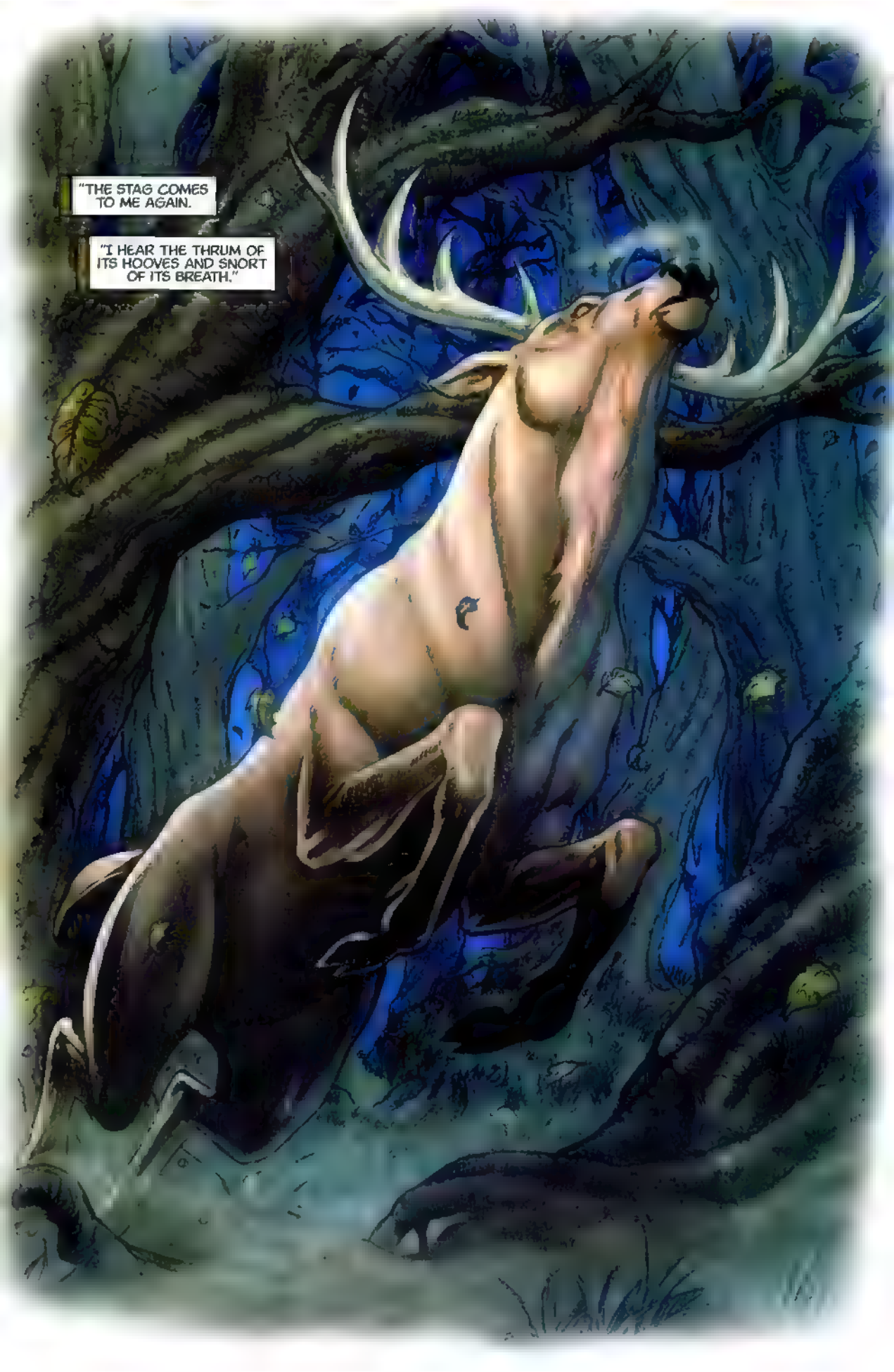

"THE STAG COMES TO ME AGAIN.
"I HEAR THE THRUM OF ITS HOOVES AND SNORT OF ITS BREATH."

"THE STAG IS *RUNNING* THROUGH THE WOOD ALONG THE SLOPE TO THE CRYDE

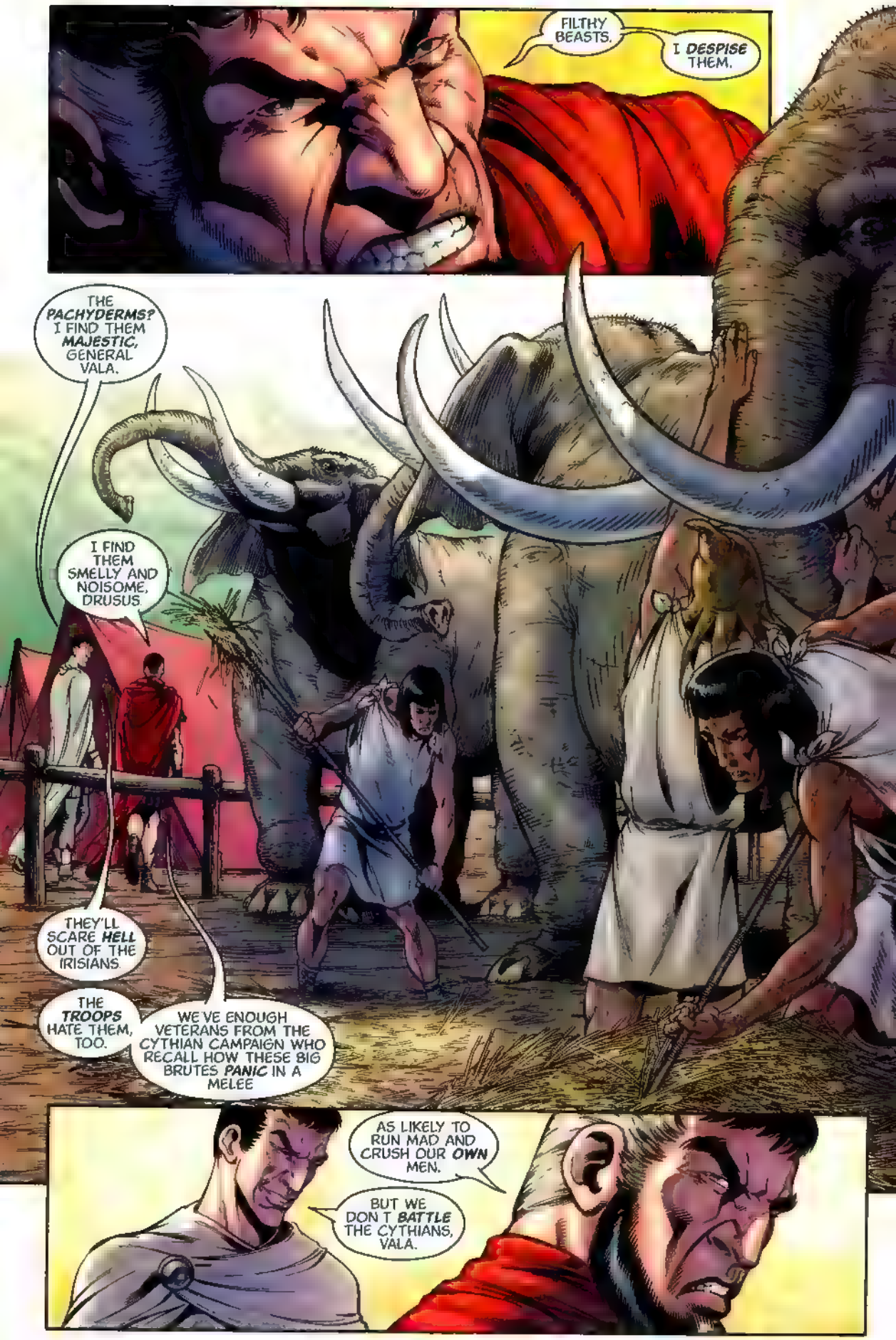
"THEN THE *FENS* THAT FILL THE LOW PART OF THE VALLEY THERE

AND *FINALLY* UP GOATFOOT HILL.

"RAVENS. *STORMS* OF RAVENS ARE THERE."

'THEY FEED ON A GREAT BEAST
"IT'S ONE OF THE BEASTS BROUGHT BY THE OUTLANDERS.
' THEIR CAWS ARE ALL THAT CAN BE HEARD'

I HEAR THEM STILL
WHAT DOES IT MEAN, BRATH?
I CANNOT KNOW.
THESE VISIONS -- DREAMS -- DO NOT EXPLAIN THEMSELVES.
THIS POWER TO SEE HAS BEEN GIVEN ME BUT IT IS MY TASK TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH THE STAG BRINGS ME
AND YOU WILL, MY LOVE
I MUST, TANIELLA.
FOR ALL OF US.


FILTHY BEASTS.
I DESPISE THEM.
THE PACHYDERMS? I FIND THEM MAJESTIC, GENERAL VALA.
I FIND THEM SMELLY AND NOISOME, DRUSUS.
THEY'LL SCARE HELL OUT OF THE IRISIANS.
THE TROOPS HATE THEM, TOO.
WE'VE ENOUGH VETERANS FROM THE CYTHIAN CAMPAIGN WHO RECALL HOW THESE BIG BRUTES PANIC IN A MELEE
AS LIKELY TO RUN MAD AND CRUSH OUR OWN MEN.
BUT WE DON'T BATTLE THE CYTHIANS, VALA.

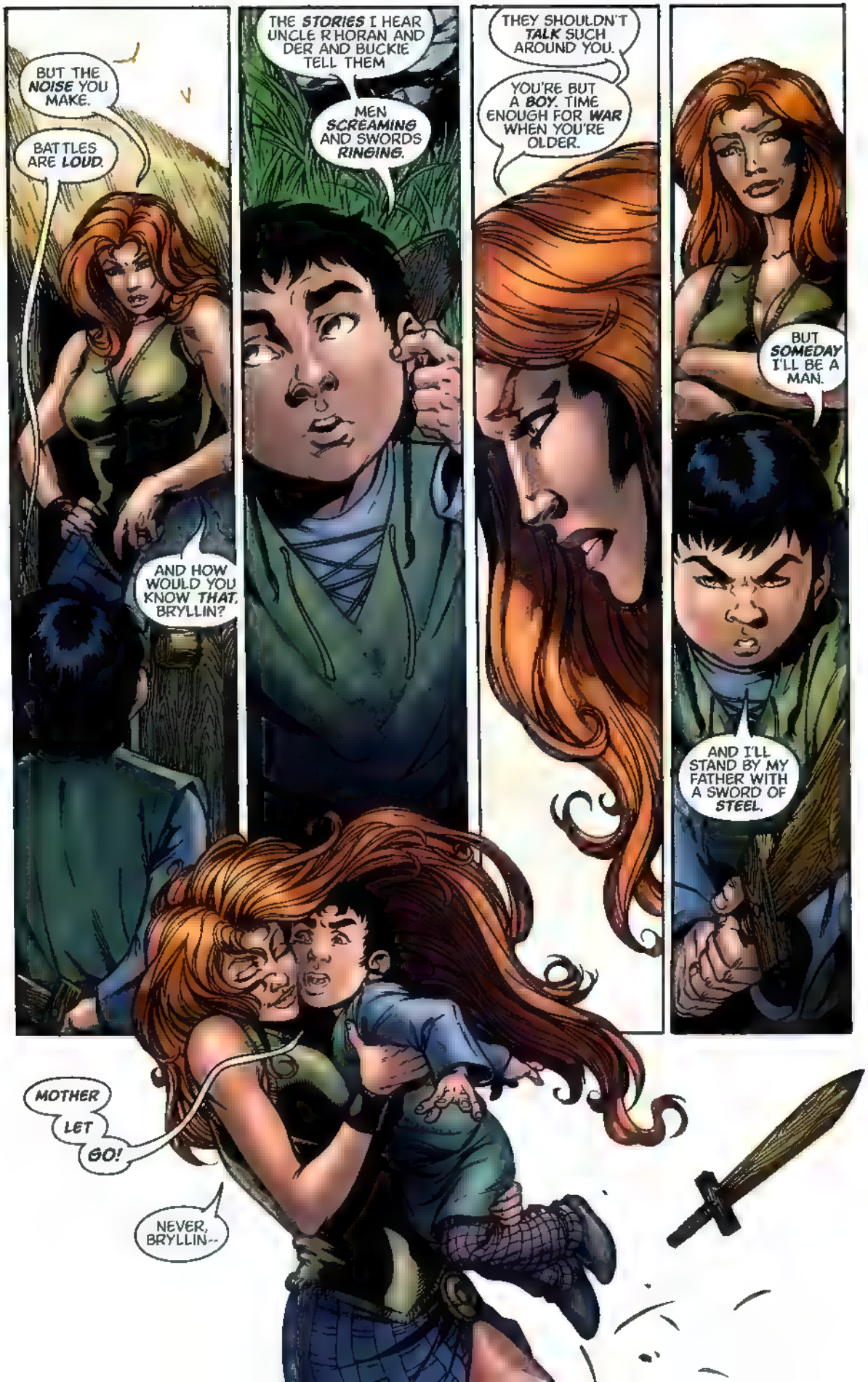
THESE MONSTERS ARE A NEW HORROR TO THE BARBARIANS.
THEY'LL HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO COUNTER THEM.
I STILL DISAPPROVE.
BUT QUINTILLIUS SAYS--
I AM QUITE AWARE OF THE EMPEROR'S THOUGHTS ON THE SUBJECT OF PACHYDERMS.
I READ HIS CODEX ON THE BATTLE OF CHADALYMA.
A BATTLE HE DID NOT HAVE THE PLEASURE TO ATTEND. I WAS THERE AS A YOUNG OPTIO.
AND IT WAS THE COURAGE OF THE THIRTEENTH THAT WON THAT DAY, NOT SOME GASEOUS, TRUMPETING ANIMALS.
DESPITE THAT, GENERAL, HIS WILL BE--
EEWWW--
--FILTHY BEASTS.

THISTLE AND THYME--
BERRY AND RIND--
SLEEP TO COME
AND JUST IN TIME--
A BIT OF BARK--
A LIMB OF FERN--
THE FATE OF MAC GAREN
SOON TO LEARN--
CINNTRA, WHAT DEVIL'S WORK ARE YOU ABOUT?
YOU.
DOOM COMES, S'MATH. I SEE IT IN THE SKY AND IN THE SWIRL OF THE STREAM
THE OUTLANDER ARMY IS ON THE MARCH. YOU DON'T NEED PORTENTS TO KNOW THAT, OLD CRONE.
WHAT MESS ARE YOU MIXING NOW? THESE BERRIES ARE POISON, AS YOU WELL KNOW

A POULTICE JUST A SALVE
NOTHING LIKE THE MAGICKS WE'LL NEED T'STEM THIS INVASION.
LIKE BLOOD SACRIFICE.
THE GODDESS DEMANDS A LIFE! A MAN OR A WOMAN!
A MATE OR A SERVANT! WE MUST SEND AN OFFERING!
THE OUTLANDERS ARE SENT BY THEIR OWN GODS, NOT BECKONED BY OURS.
FOOL! OLD FOOL!
YOU'LL SEE TH' TRUTH OF MY WORDS!
WHEN YOU FIND AN OUTLANDER SWORD IN YOUR BELLY, YOU'LL KNOW CINNTRA SAW TRUE!

"YOU'LL KNOW TOO *LATE!*"
THIS T'YOUR *PLEASURE*, BRATH?
LIKE RAVENS PECKING AT A MONSTER
EH?
MAKE ME A *HUNDRED* SCORE, MAGH

"WE'LL NEED EVERY ONE"
NAY! DO NOT TAKE MY LIFE!
PLEDGE TO SERVE MY CLAN AND YOU LIVE, MAC DOOL!
BRYLLIN!
BRYLLIN MAC GAREN, YOU LET YOUNG KYRA STAND!
AYE, MOTHER~
ME MUM IS CALLIN'!
KYRA!
I WASN'T REALLY GOIN' T'KILL HIM.
I KNOW THAT, SON.


BUT THE NOISE YOU MAKE.
BATTLES ARE LOUD.
AND HOW WOULD YOU KNOW THAT, BRYLLIN?
THE STORIES I HEAR UNCLE R'HORAN AND DER AND BUCKIE TELL THEM
MEN SCREAMING AND SWORDS RINGING.
THEY SHOULDN'T TALK SUCH AROUND YOU.
YOU'RE BUT A BOY. TIME ENOUGH FOR WAR WHEN YOU'RE OLDER.
BUT SOMEDAY I'LL BE A MAN.
AND I'LL STAND BY MY FATHER WITH A SWORD OF STEEL.
MOTHER LET GO!
NEVER, BRYLLIN--

"--I LL NEVER LET YOU GO."
THAT SHANK WAS GAMEY, FRIEND.
I TOL' ME WOMAN TO LET 'ER SOAK IN SPIRITS.
T'ISN'T THE JUICE IT LAID IN. THAT DEER DIED BAD.
MY ARROW BROUGHT IT DOWN IN THE LAST.
YOUR THIRD ARROW, FRIEND.
STILL, I GOT IT.
MEAT'S GAMEY IF IT DIES HARD.
DIDN'T STEW LONG ENOUGH, I SAY.

THESE MISSILES ARE LIKE THOSE THE *OUTLANDERS* USE.
THEY'LL TRAVEL *FARTHER* AND STRIKE *HARDER*.
NOT *LIKE* RIVER STONES.
GIVE IT A *TRY*, DER.
I WILL, COUSIN, I *WILL*
FOR ALL THE GOOD WE'LL SEE
THERE!
SMACK IN THE MONSTER'S *SKULL!*

GOOD 'UN, DER!
THANKS, BUCKIE!
BUT WHAT'S A BEE STING T'ONE A' THEM BRUTES?
ARE WE TO WAR OR TO A GAME?
YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE, VINN MAC DOOL?
I DON'T SEE HOW CHILDREN'S TOYS WILL WIN THIS FRAY.
WILL WE CROSS BLADES WITH THE STEEL HELMS OR JUST THROW STONES AT THEM AND RUN?
Y'PEAT TROTTIN' SWINE OF A--
WHAT M'COUSIN R'HORAN IS TRYING TO SAY...
...IS THAT THE OUTLANDERS FIGHT A DIFFERENT KIND OF WAR.
TO WIN WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT.
YOUR "DIFFERENT KIND OF WAR" SOUNDS LIKE WHAT THE MAC DOOLS CALL COWARDICE
WE'LL BE RELYIN ON MORE THAN ROCK THROWIN'.

NO.
LET ME BE LET ME BE
~WHO?
LUCIUS?
WHO BUT I MIGHT HAVE SLIPPED YOUR GUARD?
DO YOU FEAR SOME BEARDED SAVAGE SLITTING YOUR THROAT WHILE YOU SLEEP, DEAR BROTHER?
OR IS IT ME YOU FEAR, DRUSUS?

I WAS-- STARTLED
THE NIGHT BEFORE A CAMPAIGN--
THE EMPEROR IS VERY ANXIOUS ABOUT THIS EXPEDITION, BROTHER
HE NEEDN'T BE. I'M DOING MY BEST.
WERE I GENERAL INSTEAD OF ARABACUS VALA--
POOR DRUSUS
BUT FOR AN ACCIDENT OF BIRTH YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN A GREAT MAN--
AS GREAT AS QUINTILLIUS HIMSELF
DAMN YOU, LUCIUS--
ALL IS WELL, TRIBUNE?
I HEARD SHOUTS--
A DREAM, SOLDIER. RETURN TO YOUR WATCH
NAUGHT BUT AN UGLY DREAM.

"OR SOME DARKER SHADE?"

BRATH~ IT IS TIME TO LAY DOWN THE BURDEN GIVEN YOU~

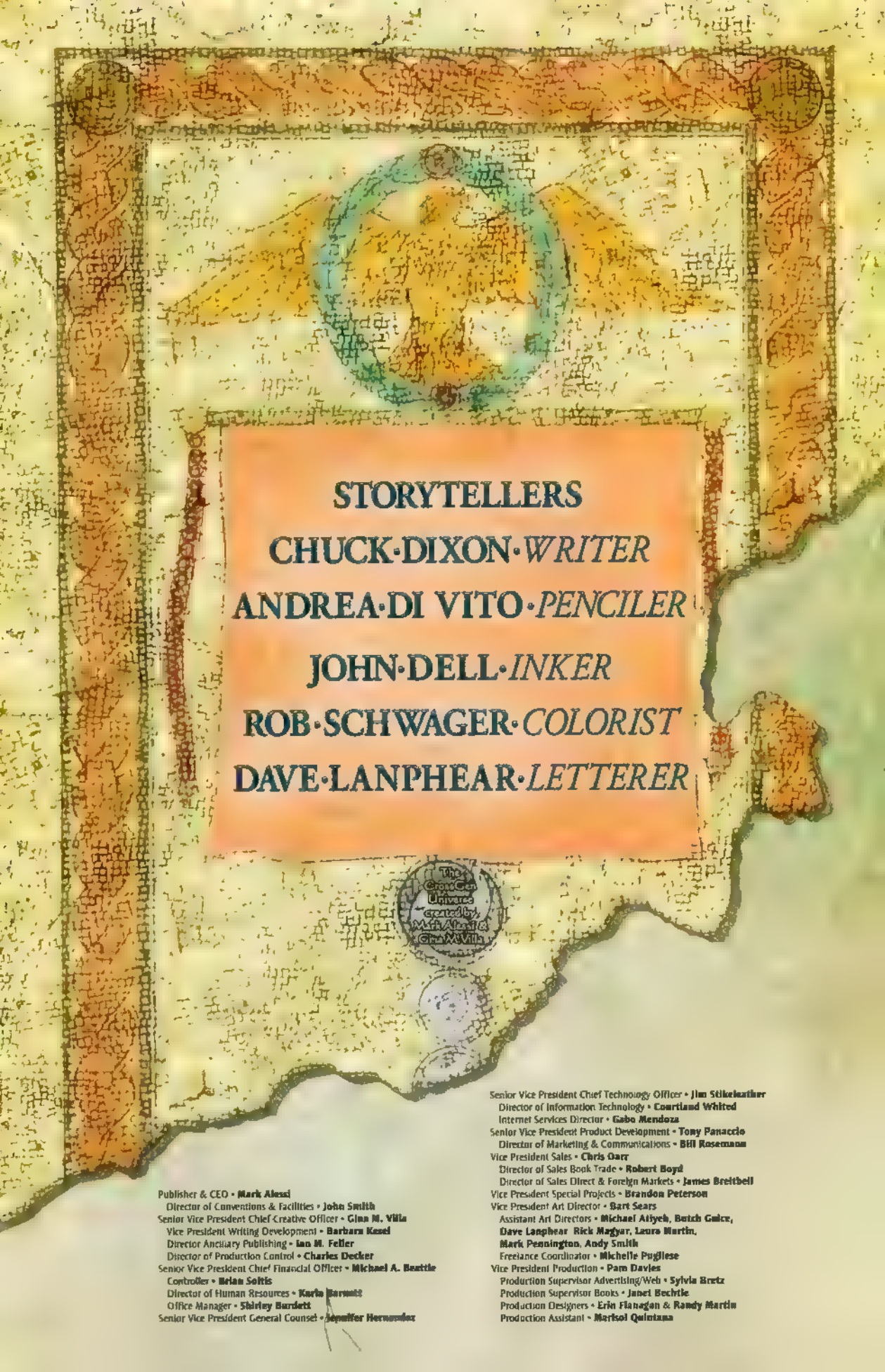
~ALLOW THIS UNWANTED GIFT TO FLOW BACK TO ITS SOURCE.

~BACK TO ME.

NO!
BRATH?
YOUR CHEST--
THE EARTH GODDESS CAME TO ME--
--AND SHE TOOK FROM ME THE BRAND.
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
I CANNOT KNOW ONLY THAT I WISH FOR YOU TO STAY IN DUN GAREN, TANIELLA.
MY PLACE IS BY YOU IN BATTLE.
I HAVE A BLACK FEELING ABOUT THE COMING FIGHT.
EVEN MORE REASON TO RIDE WITH YOU.
YOUR PLACE IS WITH OUR SON
THEN FIGHT HARD, BRATH MAC GAREN--

"--FOR IF YOU'LL NOT RETURN IT'S IN HELL I'LL HAVE MY SAY"
IS IT AS YOU SAW IT, COUSIN?
AYE THE STAG TROD THIS HILL, THE WOOD TO ONE SIDE AND THE MARSHES TO T'OTHER.
I CAN ONLY HOPE I KNOW THE MEANING OF IT
T'IS A WONDER.
EH?
T'IS A WONDER--

"--IF THERE'S A STEEL HELM *LEFT* IN WHATEVER BEDEVILED LAND THEY MARCHED FROM."



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The defensive war that Brath and his united clans have thus far fought has failed to halt the outland army. Now three full legions and auxiliaries enter the lands of the Mac Garens.

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THE SOD SHAKES UNDER THEIR FEET, BUCKIE.
AYE
AND IT WILL SHAKE ALL THE MORE WHEN WE FELL ONE A THE BRUTES.

SLINGS AWAY!

AIM FOR THEIR FAT *HEADS*, LADS!

LISTEN TO IT *ROAR!*

THOSE LEAD MISSILES WILL *NEVER* HARM THOSE BEASTS, BRATH

WE NEED ONLY *TURN* THEM, R'HORAN.

THOSE BOYS LL BE *TRAMPLED!* LET US *FIGHT!*

THERE LL BE *ENOUGH* FIGHT FOR ALL, COUSIN. WE WAIT UNTIL THE LADS HAVE DONE THEIR *WORK.*

THE OUTLANDERS HAVE NO *CHOICE* BUT TO COME TO US.

THE *WOOD* BLOCKS THEIR WAY TO THE SOUTH

AND THE *FENS* TO THE NORTH

ALL WE MUST DO IS *HOLD* THIS HILL UNTIL THE TIME IS RIGHT AND THEIR RANKS WILL *BREAK* LIKE WAVES ON A ROCK.

IT'S THOSE CYTHIAN ARCHERS THAT TROUBLE ME, COUSIN
THEY GET THROUGH THOSE TREES AN' TO OUR FLANK
I HAVE MINDED THAT
THE MAC DOOLS WILL STAND THAT GROUND A TASK SIMPLE ENOUGH EVEN FOR THEM
I'D RATHER TRUST THE CYTHIANS
"I WONDER WHO THEM MAC DOOLS HAVE LESS LOVE FOR
"THE MAC GARENS OR THE STEELHELMS.
"YOU'VE MORE FAITH IN THEM THAN I EVER WILL BRATH."

THE STAG GOD GUIDES ME, R'HORAN. THE DAY IS OURS IF WE BUT FOLLOW HIS WAY.
SHIELDS UP! THEIR BOWS HAVE GREATER RANGE THAN OURS.
UNNH!
THOSE CYTHIANS AGAIN
WE NEED BOWS LIKE THAT
CAST YOUR EYES TO THE FORE, COUSINS!
THE GREAT BEASTS TURN! JUST AS THE GOD OF STAGS REVEALED TO ME!

"ONE MISSILE FROM A BOY'S SLING IS LESS THAN A BEE STING TO THEM.

BUT SCORE UPON *SCORE* TAKE THEIR *TOLL!*

' THEIR BRAINS BURN WITH *FEAR* AND *FURY!*

"I KNOW NOT WHAT BENIGHTED LAND THESE BRUTES *CAME* FROM--

'--BUT ANXIOUS THEY ARE TO *RETURN* THERE!

"BE THEY DEMONS OR SPIRITS, IT IS THE ***STEELHELMS*** WHO WILL PAY HELL FOR BRINGING THEM TO URELAND!"

NOW, WHILE THEIR RANKS BLEED FROM THE GREAT WOUND CAUSED BY THEIR BEASTS!

NOW, NO MATTER THEIR NUMBER WE DRIVE THEM TO THE SEA!

OUR GODS SPIT ON THEM! OUR LAND IS FIT ONLY FOR THEIR GRAVES!

TO THE VICTORY PROMISED US BY THE GOD OF STAGS!

TO THE DEATH OF ANY AND ALL WHO THREATEN URELAND AND--

"--DUN GAREN!"
NO WORD OF THE BATTLE?
NAY, G'RANNICH. NO RUNNERS HAVE RETURNED.
HE HAS TAKEN MY HEART FROM ME WHY DID BRATH BID ME STAY?
TO PROTECT YOU, DEAR ONE
BUT I ALWAYS RODE AT HIS SIDE BEFORE.
WE HAVE NEVER FOUGHT SUCH A FOE AS THESE STEELHELMS.
AND NEVER SO CLOSE TO DUN GAREN
I WONDER 'BOUT THEM OUTLANDERS, I DO
AND HE'S A SON TO CONCERN HIM NOW.
HE'S NOT HAD THAT BEFORE

"BRYLLIN IS SUCH A PRIDE TO HIM"
BRYLLIN! FETCH THE BALL T'ME!
NO! ME!
A FINE HANDSOME LAD
YOU BE BRATH'S BOY?
I AM.
I KNOW YOUR DA. KNOWN HIM SINCE HE WAS YOUR SIZE, I DID

"KNOW HIM THITHER *AND* YON. KNOW HIS LIGHTS *AND* HIS SHADOWS."

WE HAVE 'EM *RUNNIN'*, COUSINS!

RUN THEM TO *GROUND!* RUN THEM TO *DEATH!*

SEND THEM HOME T'CROSS *URELAND* FROM THEIR MAPS!

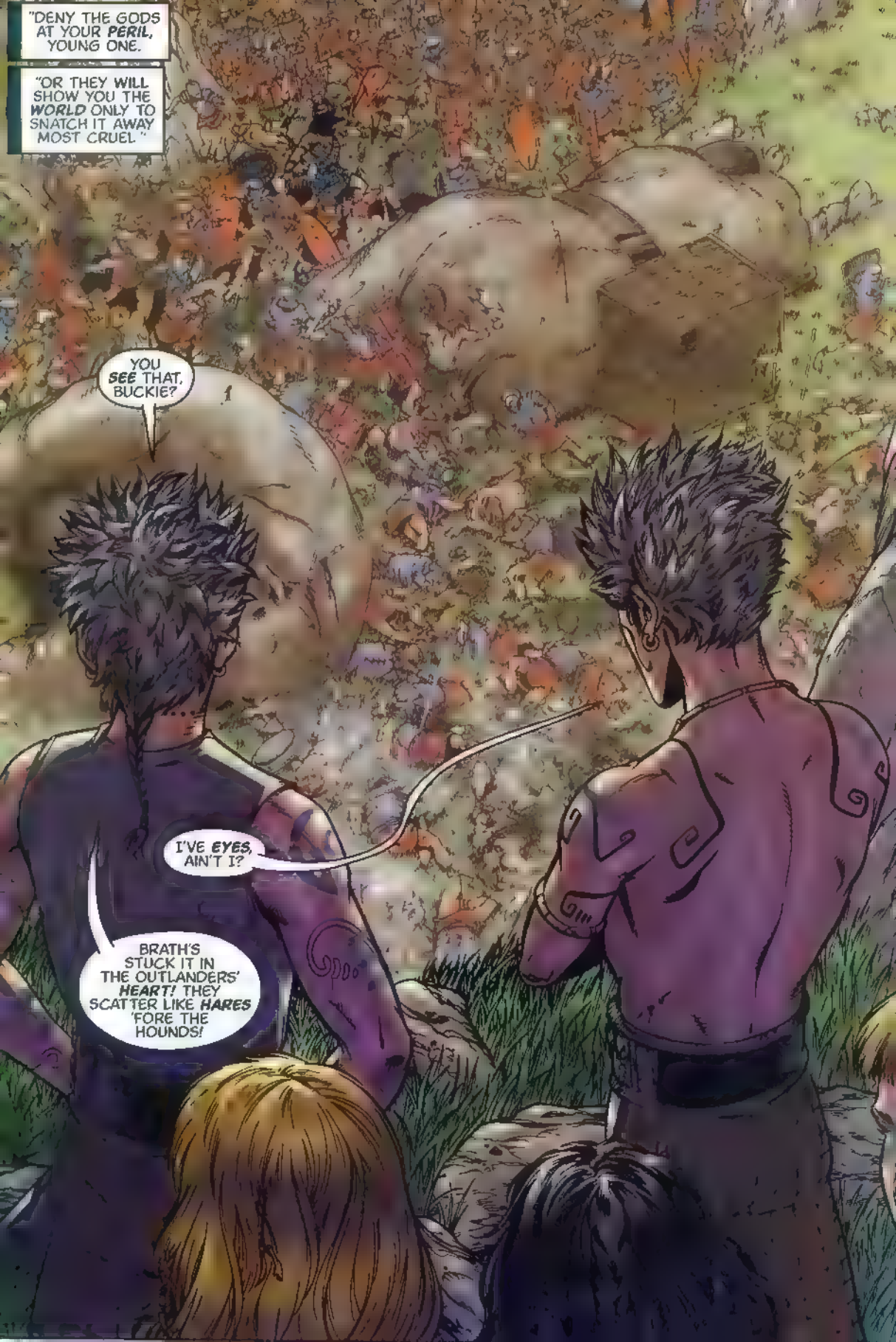
"I COULD TELL Y TALES OF YOUR FATHER AFORE *YOU* WERE BORN

THEY'RE *BREAKING*, LADS!

THEIR FINE ARMOR AND FINE HELMS'LL NOT *SAVE* 'EM!

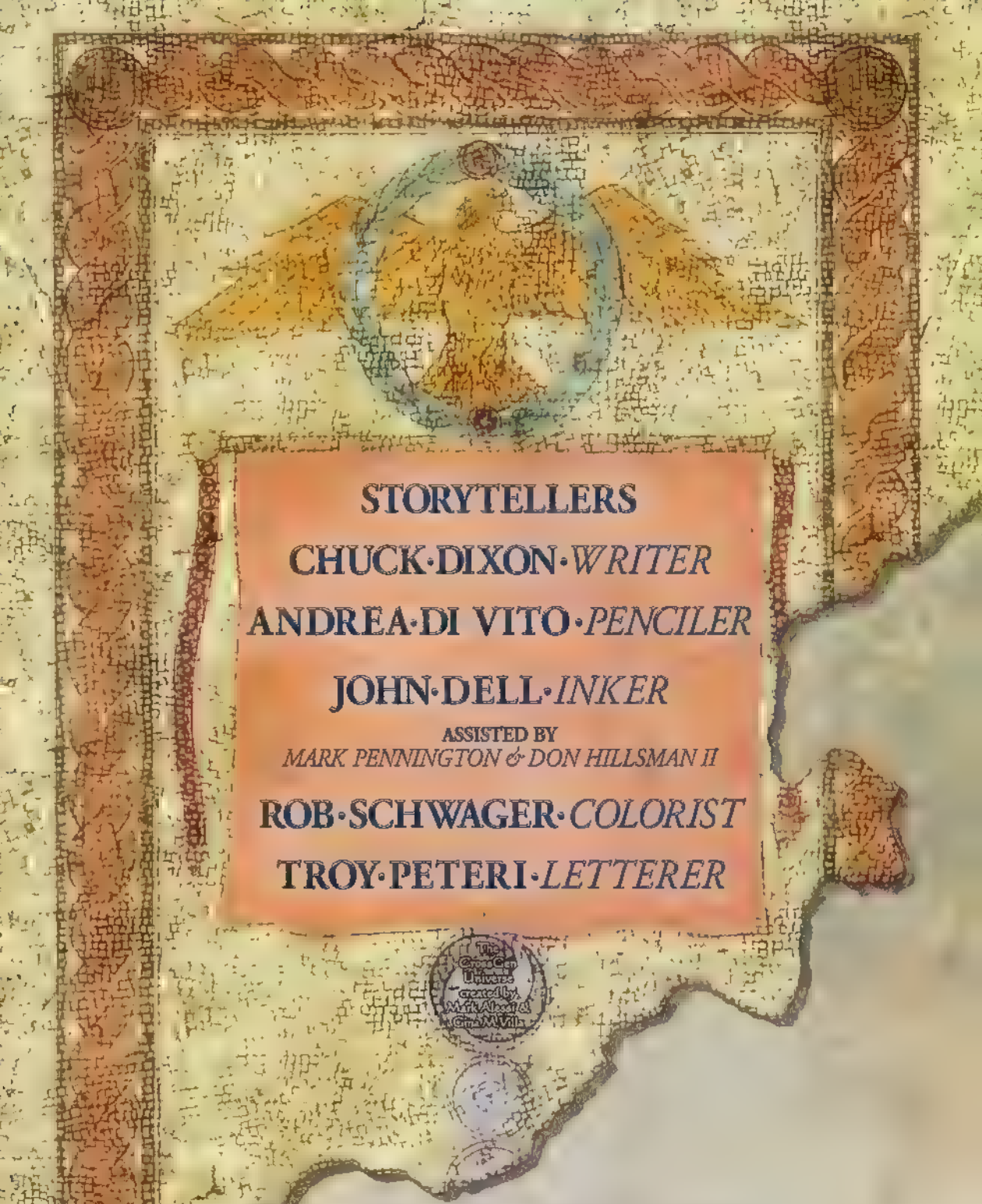
"A WILD ONE, HE WAS MORE T HOME IN THE FENS AND FORESTS THAN WITH HIS FOLK
"EVEN THEN THE GODS HAD THEIR EYE ON IM.

"BUT BRATH MAC GAREN DENIED THEM; WOULD NOT GIVE THEM THEIR *DUE*.
"SO THEY *MARKED* HIM, THEY WOVE HIM A DESTINY~
"~A DESTINY OF FIRE AND STEEL
"THEY'D SEE HIM A *WARRIOR*
"THEY'D SEE HIM A *KING*
"AND THEY'D SEE HIM BROUGHT *LOW*


"DENY THE GODS AT YOUR PERIL, YOUNG ONE.
"OR THEY WILL SHOW YOU THE WORLD ONLY TO SNATCH IT AWAY MOST CRUEL."
YOU SEE THAT, BUCKIE?
I'VE EYES, AIN'T I?
BRATH'S STUCK IT IN THE OUTLANDERS' HEART! THEY SCATTER LIKE HARES 'FORE THE HOUNDS!

LET'S GO DOWN, BUCKIE! I FANCY ONE OF THEM CLOAKS!
NO! WE'RE TO HOLD HERE, DER
AW.
DO AS BRATH SAYS. HE SEEN IT ALL IN HIS VISION. HE TELLS US WHAT PART WE PLAY
IT'S ALMOST OVER, BUCKIE.
THERE'LL BE TIME ENOUGH--
UNNH!
BUCKIE!

THE CYTHIANS!
UHH - HOW DID THEY GET BEHIND US?
THE MAC DOOLS-
THE MAC DOOLS, AYE. IT'S BLACK TREACHERY, COUSIN.
"AND THE MAC DOOLS ARE AT ITS HEART."



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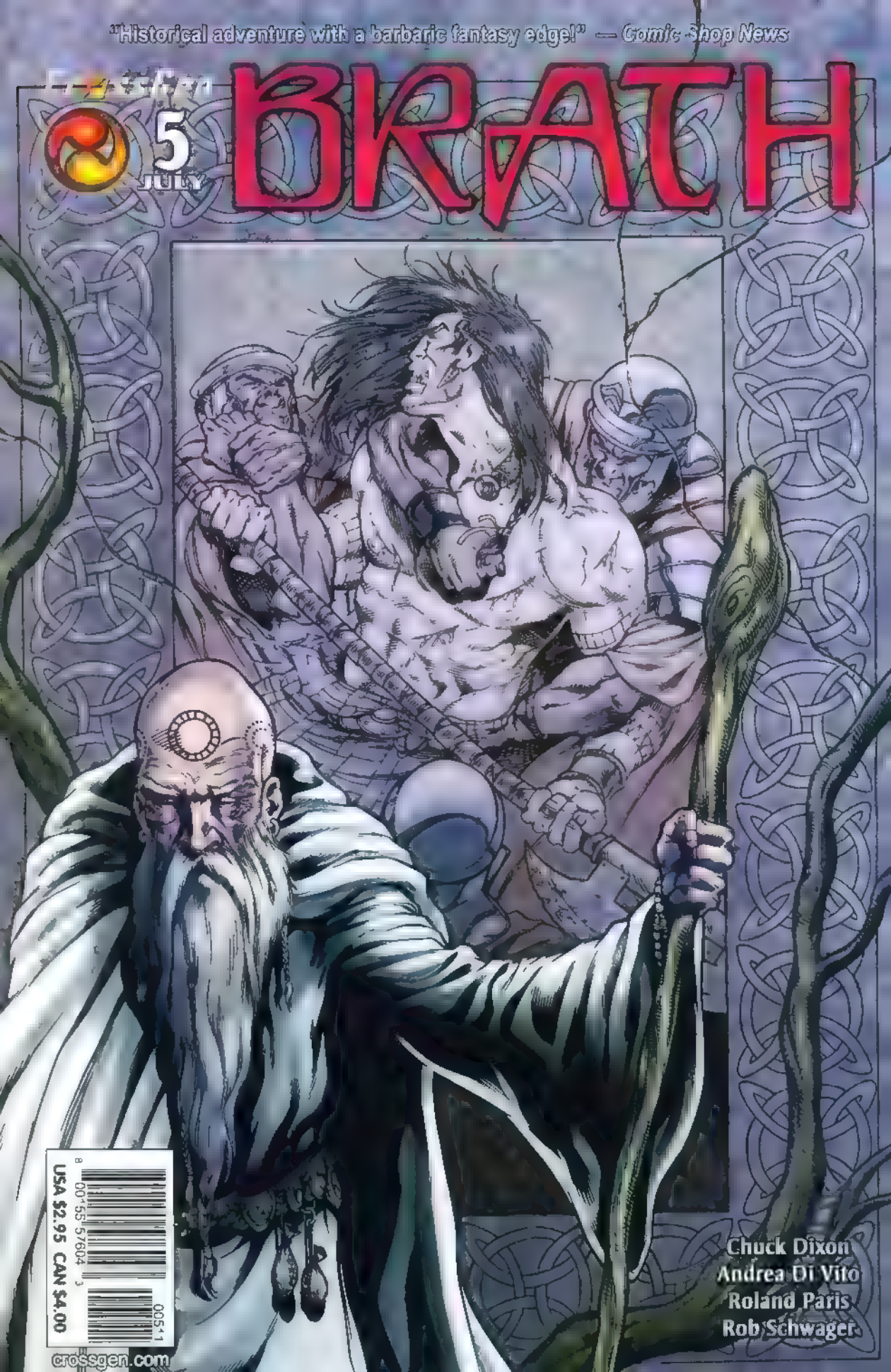
BRATH



Chuck Dixon
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From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe the world is ruled by the emperor Quintillius Aurelius Galba Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. His taxes force citizens and subjects alike to finance the opulence and decadence of the great capital city. His slaves harvest grain, mine gold and silver and pull oars on his fleets of galleys. Only the gods sit in judgement of his august presence.

Yet one land and one people remain beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the throne of the great Quintillius. Led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen destroy every force set against them.

Touched by the mark of his chosen god, the Stag, Brath holds together an uneasy alliance of tribes and clans. Through visions, in which a stag shows him portents of future days, Brath sees the path that his people must follow if they are to remain free from the domination of their enemy.

Brath and his clans have been betrayed on the battlefield by the Mac Dools. Now the Mac Garens and their allied clans are trapped between the shields of the legions before them and the arrows of the Cythian bowmen behind.

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"THIS VICTORY WAS *PAID* FOR--
"--WITH GOLD AND SILVER IN LIEU OF *BLOOD*."

"THE IRISIANS ARE BETRAYED BY ONE OF THEIR *OWN*.

"A CLAN WHOSE RANCOR FOR BRATH MAC GAREN OUTWEIGHS *EVEN* THEIR HATRED FOR US.

"AND SO A HOST OF CYTHIAN BOWMEN TAKE POSITION ON HIGH GROUND *BEHIND* THE BARBARIANS.

"THIS TIGHTENING SNARE MAY BE THE SINGLE ELEMENT THAT ALLOWS US TO *WIN* THE DAY."

"FOR ALL HIS ***BRAVERY***, FOR ALL HIS ***SAVAGERY***, THIS BRATH MAC GAREN WILL LEAD HIS PEOPLE TO DESTRUCTION.

"I WILL GRANT THAT HE IS A BETTER ***STRATEGIST*** THAN WE'VE YET FACED ON THIS WRETCHED ISLAND.

"I DARE SAY WE'VE TAUGHT HIM A LESSON OR TWO AND HE HAS ***GAINED*** BY THE TUTELAGE.

"BUT FAR TOO LITTLE AND FAR TOO ***LATE***."

DRE'S HAMMER

"CIVILIZATION IS NOT TO BE TAKEN IN A SINGLE BITE"

BRATH!

WE ARE ***BETRAYED!***

IS *THAT* WHAT YOU CALL IT, TRIBUNE? *CIVILIZATION?*

WE'VE *GULLED* THE BARBARIAN KING INTO A TRAP THAT MEANS HIS DEATH.

TREACHERY IS A *PART* OF WAR, GENERAL VALA

DO NOT *PRESUME* TO LECTURE ME ON WAR, DRUSUS.

I MERELY POINT OUT THAT THE FIELD OF BATTLE IS *NO* PLACE FOR SENTIMENT OR HIGH HONOR.

WE TAKE VICTORY *HOWEVER* IT IS OFFERED.

WHILE I MEANT NO OFFENSE AND HESITATE TO *CORRECT* YOU, GENERAL--

"~IT IS MY DUTY TO REMIND YOU THAT THE EMPEROR WISHES THE KING OF THE URELANDERS TAKEN *ALIVE*"
SHIELDS!
SHIELDS!
A RING OF SHIELDS!
THE *MAC DOOLS!* IT *HAD* T'BE THOSE GUTLESS DOGS!
WE WILL DEAL WITH *VINN* AND HIS CLAN WHEN WE'VE FINISHED *HERE.*
YOU SEE A BIT OF BLUE *SKY,* DO YOU? MUST BE B'TWEEN THE *ARROWS* RAININ DOWN ON US.
THE GOD OF STAGS *ASSURED* ME VICTORY, R'HORAN.

AND WHERE IS HE *NOW*, EH? DID HE SHOW YOU THE MAC DOOLS SELLING OUR *BACKS?*

DID YOUR PRECIOUS HORNED VISION SHOW YOU THE *END* OF THE MAC GARENS?

THIS IS *NOT* THE END, COUSIN

THE DAY IS *YET* TO WANE

THE STEELHELMS MAY *TAKE* THIS GROUND.

BUT THERE ARE MANY HOURS AND MANY *LIVES* TO SPEND BEFORE THAT

THOSE INFERNAL MACHINES BEG TO *DIFFER*, BRATH

STAND FIRM, CLANSMEN!

ALLOW THE RING TO BREAK AND THEY'LL BE *AMONG* US!

PLANT YOUR *FEET*, MAC GARENS!

THEY'LL NOT SHIFT *THIS* STONE!

WHOOSH

KRAKASH

STEEL YOURSELVES, COUSINS!

READY FOR THE ASSAULT TO FOLLOW!

THE ELEVENTH

EH?

SEND IN THE ELEVENTH

YOU HEARD THE GENERAL!

SOUND THE ELEVENTH LEGION TO THE FORE!

THAT'S OUR CALL!

VENGEANCE FOR THE THIRTEENTH!

VENGEANCE!

WE GO TO THE GODS.
AND MANY STEELHELMS GO *BEFORE* US.
FAREWELL, COUSIN.
FAREWELL TO *YOU*, R'HORAN, AND FAREWELL TO--

"~DUN GAREN."

AN *ARMY* ON THE HIGH ROAD

OUR *OWN?*

NO MOON TO *SEE* THEM BY, TANIELLA.

TOO *RAGGED* A LINE FOR OUTLANDERS.

IT'S *BRATH!*

HE'S COME *HOME!*

STEELBELLIES MARCH *PRETTY* ALL NEAT AND *TIDY.*

THEN IT *IS* THE MAC GARENS.

THEY APPROACH THE GATE.

IT'S~ IT'S~

DEVIL'S LUCK

"~THE MAC DOOLS."

NO SOUNDING OF *HORNS* FOR THE RETURNING HEROES?

OR DO YOU WAIT IN *VAIN* FOR YOUR BELOVED BRATH?

BRYLLIN!

BRYLLIN!

WE MUST FLEE!

NO!

WE'LL FIND THE WHELP TANIELLA

WOULDN'T *DO* TO HAVE MY NEW WIFE *PINING* FOR HER BASTARD CHILD

I WILL NEVER--
AYE, BUT YOU WILL, TANI, DEAR.
THE ROYAL BLOOD OF URELAND WILL START ANEW WITH YOU AND I.
"AND I'LL NOT HAVE THE PUPPY OF BRATH MAC GAREN TO CHALLENGE MY RIGHT.
"HE IS DEAD TO YOU. 'TIS BEST YOU FORGET HIM.
"YOUR LIFE BEGINS AGAIN THIS NIGHT, TANIELLA MAC DOOL."

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"Gorgeous...Grade: A-" — *Comics Buyer's Guide*

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Chuck Dixon Alcatena Rob Schwager

From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe the world is ruled by the emperor Quintillius Aurelius Galba Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. His taxes force citizens and subjects alike to finance the opulence and decadence of the great capital city. His slaves harvest grain, mine gold and silver and pull oars on his fleets of galleys. Only the gods sit in judgment of his august presence.

Yet one land and one people remain beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the throne of the great Quintillius. Led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen destroy every force set against them.

Touched by the mark of his chosen god, the Stag, Brath holds together an uneasy alliance of tribes and clans. Through visions, in which a stag shows him portents of future days, Brath sees the path that his people must follow if they are to remain free from the domination of their enemy.

The clans have been defeated by the treachery of the Mac Dools. Even now, Brath Mac Garen is in chains and in transit to the Emperor's capital city.

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WITH OUR SWORDS.
WITH OUR LIVES.
WE HONOR OUR
EMPEROR AND GOD

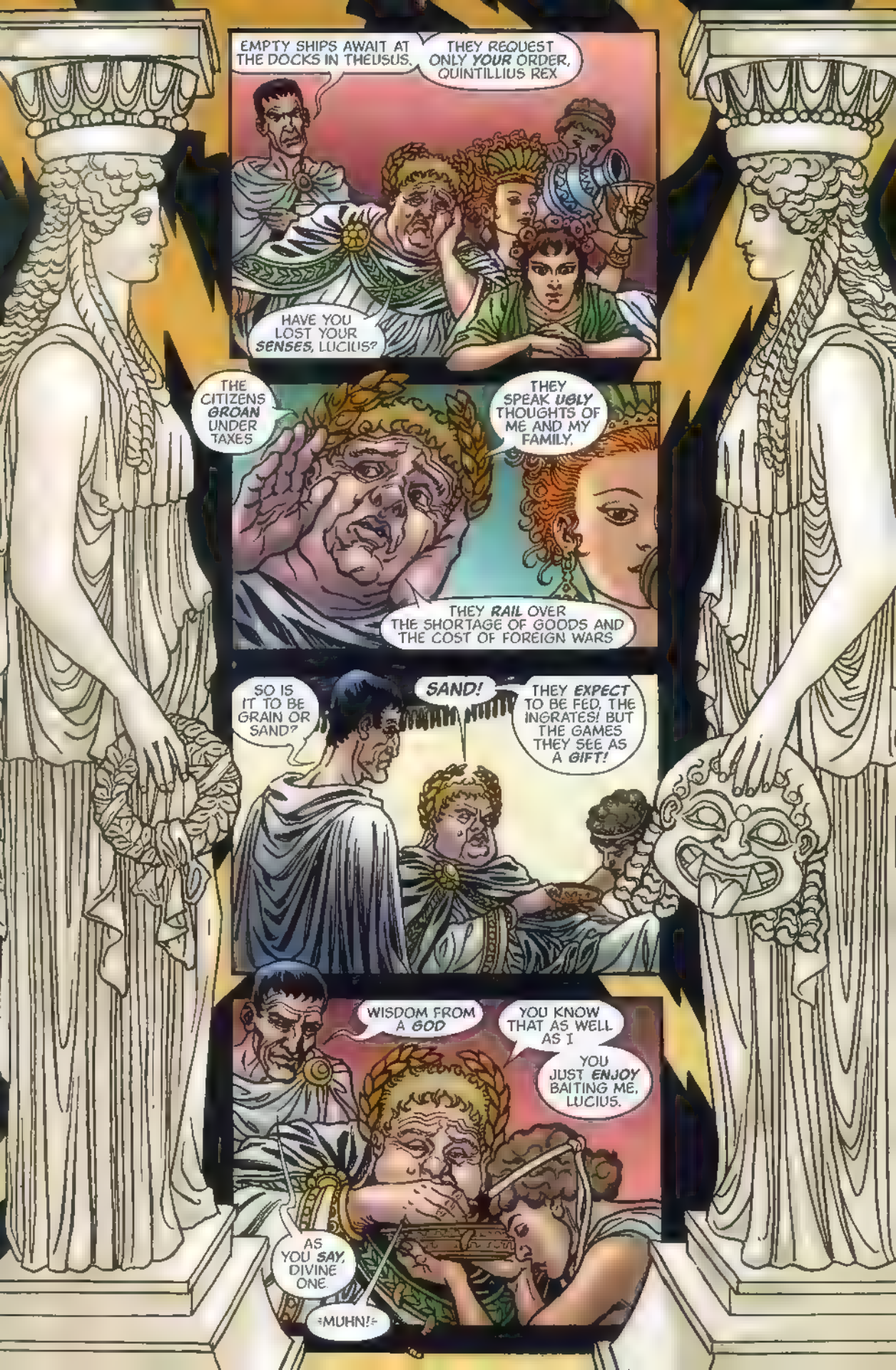
WE BEGIN TODAY'S FESTIVAL WITH SINGLE COMBAT!

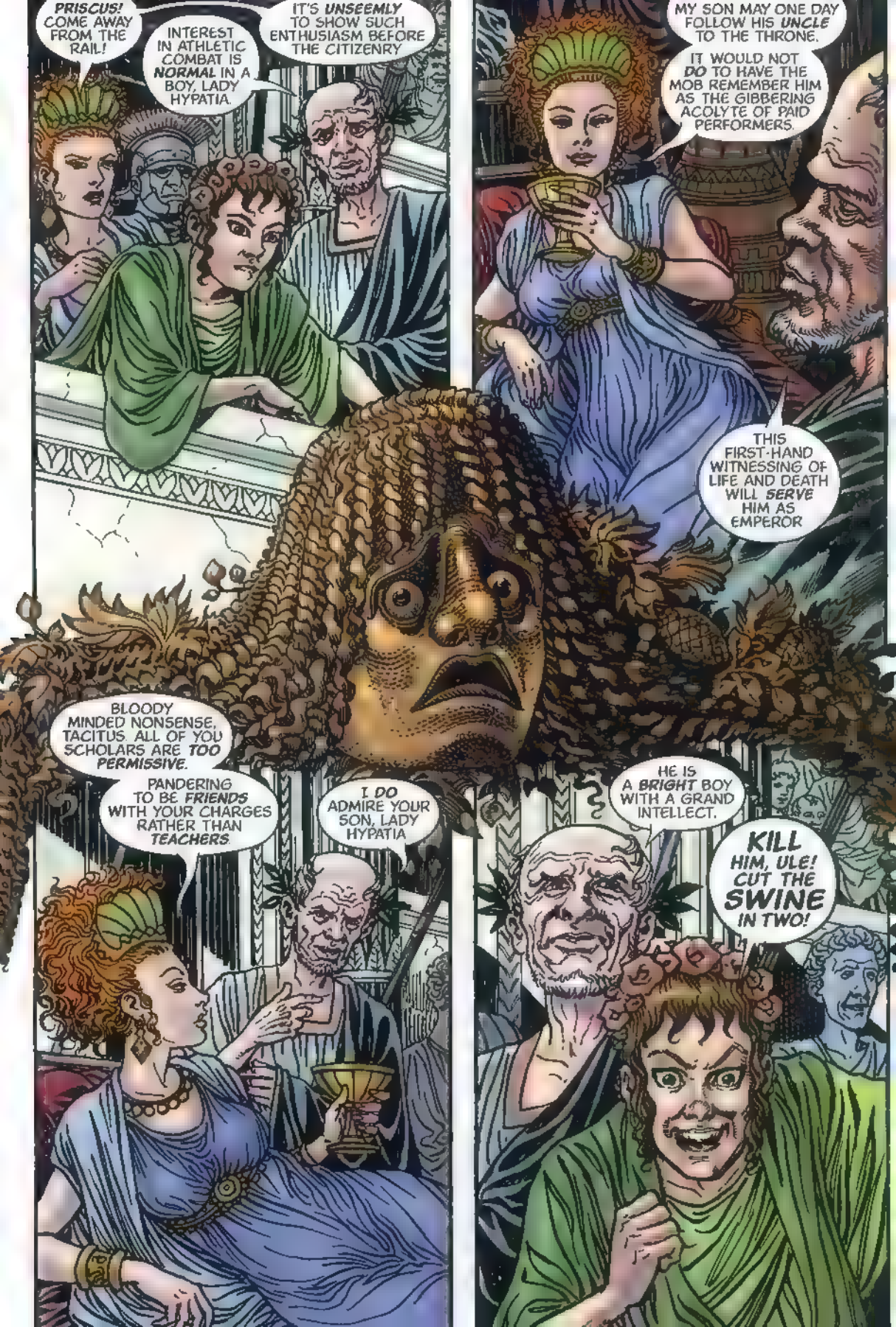
THE GREATEST FIGHTERS IN THE CITY BATTLE~

~TO THE DEATH!

I HAVE WORD OF *SHIPMENTS* FROM PTOLEMIA, YOUR DIVINITY.

YOU TROUBLE ME *HERE?*


EMPTY SHIPS AWAIT AT THE DOCKS IN THEUSUS.
THEY REQUEST ONLY YOUR ORDER, QUINTILLIUS REX
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR SENSES, LUCIUS?
THE CITIZENS GROAN UNDER TAXES
THEY SPEAK UGLY THOUGHTS OF ME AND MY FAMILY.
THEY RAIL OVER THE SHORTAGE OF GOODS AND THE COST OF FOREIGN WARS
SO IS IT TO BE GRAIN OR SAND?
SAND!
THEY EXPECT TO BE FED, THE INGRATES! BUT THE GAMES THEY SEE AS A GIFT!
WISDOM FROM A GOD
YOU KNOW THAT AS WELL AS I
YOU JUST ENJOY BAITING ME, LUCIUS.
AS YOU SAY, DIVINE ONE.
=MUHN!=


PRISCUS! COME AWAY FROM THE RAIL!
INTEREST IN ATHLETIC COMBAT IS NORMAL IN A BOY, LADY HYPATIA.
IT'S UNSEEMLY TO SHOW SUCH ENTHUSIASM BEFORE THE CITIZENRY
MY SON MAY ONE DAY FOLLOW HIS UNCLE TO THE THRONE.
IT WOULD NOT DO TO HAVE THE MOB REMEMBER HIM AS THE GIBBERING ACOLYTE OF PAID PERFORMERS.
THIS FIRST-HAND WITNESSING OF LIFE AND DEATH WILL SERVE HIM AS EMPEROR
BLOODY MINDED NONSENSE, TACITUS. ALL OF YOU SCHOLARS ARE TOO PERMISSIVE.
PANDERING TO BE FRIENDS WITH YOUR CHARGES RATHER THAN TEACHERS.
I DO ADMIRE YOUR SON, LADY HYPATIA
HE IS A BRIGHT BOY WITH A GRAND INTELLECT.
KILL HIM, ULE! CUT THE SWINE IN TWO!

"DO YOU *SEE* ULE, MOTHER?

"SHE IS *MAGNIFICENT!*

"A BATTLING *GODDESS!*

"AN *AMAZON* OUT OF LEGEND!

"SO *BEAUTIFUL.*"

THERE ARE *ALSO* URGENT REQUESTS FROM GENERAL VALA IN IRISIUM.
MORE PETITIONS AND BOTHER, LUCIUS?

IT DOES NOT *DO* TO HAVE THE PEOPLE SEE THEIR EMPEROR CONDUCTING *BUSINESS* WHILE AT THE GAMES.
I MUST APPEAR TO *SHARE* THEIR INTEREST IN THESE GHASTLY AMUSEMENTS.
BARBARIANS

WHAT SAY *YOU*, ZENO?
THIS ACTION IN IRISIUM. THIS *ANIMAL* BRADMANACUS.
HIS PEOPLE CALL HIM *BRATH*.

PUT A CROWN ON HIM AND CALL HIM *KING* OF THE *SEAS*. HE IS *STILL* AN ANIMAL.
THEIR WAR CHIEF IS TAKEN. HIS PEOPLE SCATTERED. AND YET VALA ASKS FOR *MORE* TROOPS. *MORE* GOODS.
YOU AND *I* WOULD HAVE TAKEN THEM IN ONE DAY, QUINTILLIUS. *ENSLAVED* THEIR WOMEN AND *SLAUGHTERED* THEIR MEN

OURS WAS A DIFFERENT DAY, OLD FRIEND.
TODAY, WAR IS A SCIENCE. BATTLES ARE NOT WON MERELY WITH LIVES.
IT IS A BLOODY AFFAIR. THERE'S NO CHANGING THAT.
REMEMBER OUR CAMPAIGN AGAINST OREDADES?
THERE WAS A FOE WORTHY OF THE NAME.
CRAFTY AND RUTHLESS. HIS CARTHIANS WERE A TOUGH LOT. FEARLESS AS LIONS.
AND WE CRUSHED HIM JUST THE SAME. TORE DOWN HIS CITY AND SALTED HIS FIELDS.
THE STORY OF THESE IRISII WILL END THE SAME, I SUPPOSE
OF COURSE IT WILL WHY WORRY?
ENJOY THIS SPLENDID COMBAT AND, FOR NOW, FORGET TROUBLES IN FAR FRONTIERS.
THERE! I TOLD YOU SHE WOULD BE VICTORIOUS!

"HER NAME IS ULE. SHE IS OF THE EREMANNI."

THE SINGLE COMBAT IS ENDED!

BUT IT IS ONLY A BATTLE IN A GREATER WAR!

"FROM THE *DARK* FORESTS AT OUR MOST SOUTHERN BORDERS.

"WHERE THEY WORSHIP ONLY *ANGRY* GODS.

"WHERE THE WOMEN BATTLE *ALONGSIDE* THEIR MEN.

"WHERE COWARDICE IS *UNKNOWN*."

MATTERS IN IRISIUM COME TO A CROSSROADS, DIVINITY
YOU PLAGUE ME, LUCIUS. PLAGUE AND PESTER ME
IS NOT YOUR OWN BROTHER DRUSUS BY VALA'S SIDE?
DO YOU NOT SPEAK FOR ME THROUGH HIM?
THOUGH BRATH IS OUR PRISONER, THERE IS STILL MUCH TO BE DONE.
SUBJUGATION OF IRISIUM WILL TAKE MORE LEGIONS. TWO, AT LEAST
BOTHER
AND THERE IS BRATH'S FATE TO BE DECIDED
WILL YOU GO AWAY?

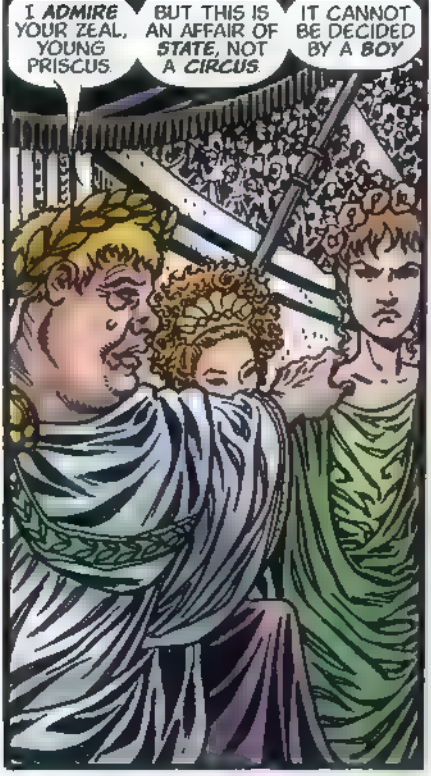
"I AM OVERSEER OF AN *EMPIRE* THAT SPANS THE WORLD.
"I MUST KEEP *THAT* WORLD IN MIND, FROM BORDER TO BORDER, FROM FARTHEST OUTPOST IN CYTHIA TO THE CLAVIUM WALL."

"THESE ***MINOR*** DETAILS ARE FOR CLERKS AND MAGISTRATES.

"WHAT IS THE LIFE OF A ***SINGLE*** SAVAGE?

"WHY MUST I CONSIDER THIS TRIFLE?"

WHAT WILL YOU *DO*, UNCLE?
WHAT MATTERS IT TO *YOU*, PRISCUS?
THIS BRATH IS A *WARRIOR*.
THE HAMMER OF URE
IT'S SAID HE BEARS SPECIAL *GIFTS* FROM HIS GODS.
A WASTE TO *CRUCIFY* SOMEONE LIKE THAT.
HE IS AN *ENEMY* OF THE EMPIRE
HIS LIFE WAS *FORFEIT* THE MOMENT HE RAISED A FIST TO THE EAGLE.
I *WISH* HIM DEAD, UNCLE. BUT ALLOW HIM TO DIE *GRANDLY*.
A DUSKY GOD OF *WAR* STANDING IN THE ARENA FACING AN *ARMY!*
HIS PASSING WOULD BE *GLORIOUS!*
A BORN ORATOR
AS I WAS ABOUT TO REMARK


I ADMIRE YOUR ZEAL, YOUNG PRISCUS
BUT THIS IS AN AFFAIR OF STATE, NOT A CIRCUS
IT CANNOT BE DECIDED BY A BOY

I WONDER IF THERE IS A VALUE IN KEEPING THIS CHIEFTAIN ALIVE.
HE UNITED HIS PEOPLE.
COULD HE NOT THEN BROKER A PEACE?
IF HE STILL HAS THE LOVE OF HIS TRIBES, PERHAPS.

MORE ECONOMICAL THAN SENDING MORE LEGIONS.
HE WOULD NOT BE THE FIRST TO GO FROM FOE TO ALLY.
IT IS WORTH CONSIDERATION, ZENO

I HATE HIM, MOTHER HOW I HATE HIM
I KNOW, DEAR HEART BUT HE IS EMPEROR
FOR NOW

"ALL *ABOUT* US THE PREDATORS.

"THE FARTHER WE PUSH OUR BOUNDARIES THE *LONGER* OUR BORDERS.

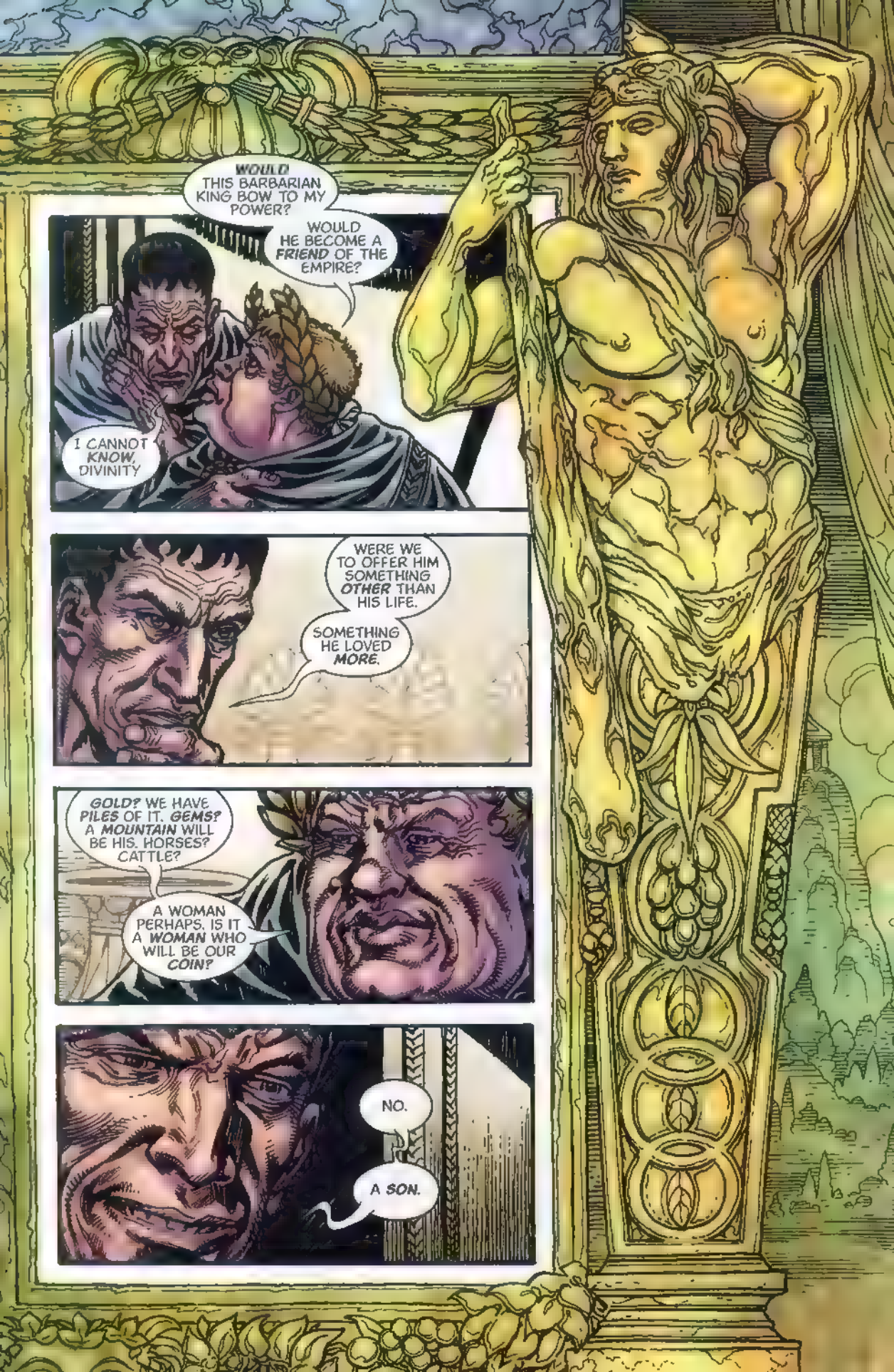
"THE MORE ENEMIES LOOKING TO TAKE WHAT IS *OURS*.

"WE ARE *UNDEFEATABLE* NOW.

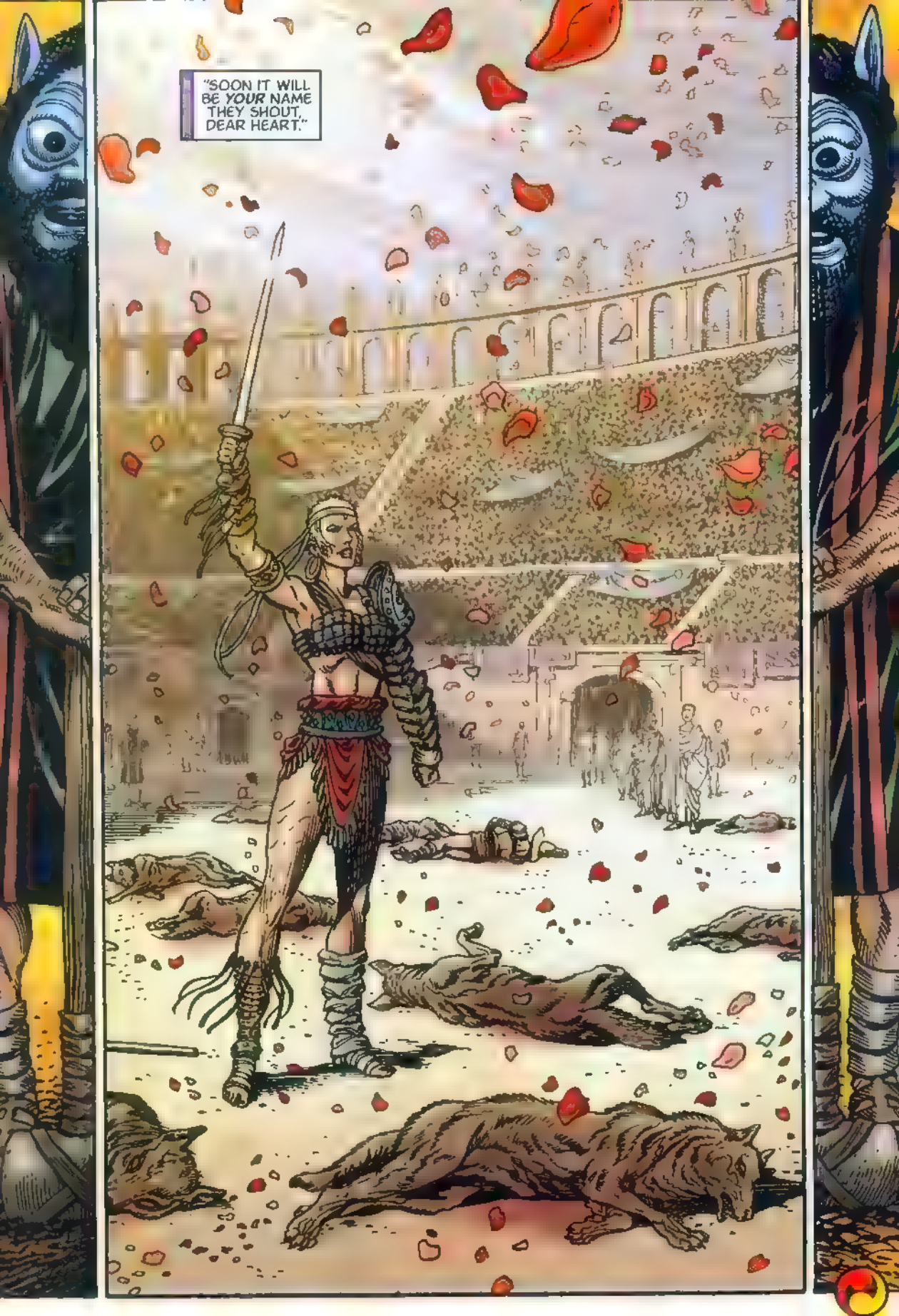
"WE CAN *FACE* THEM, EVERY ONE.

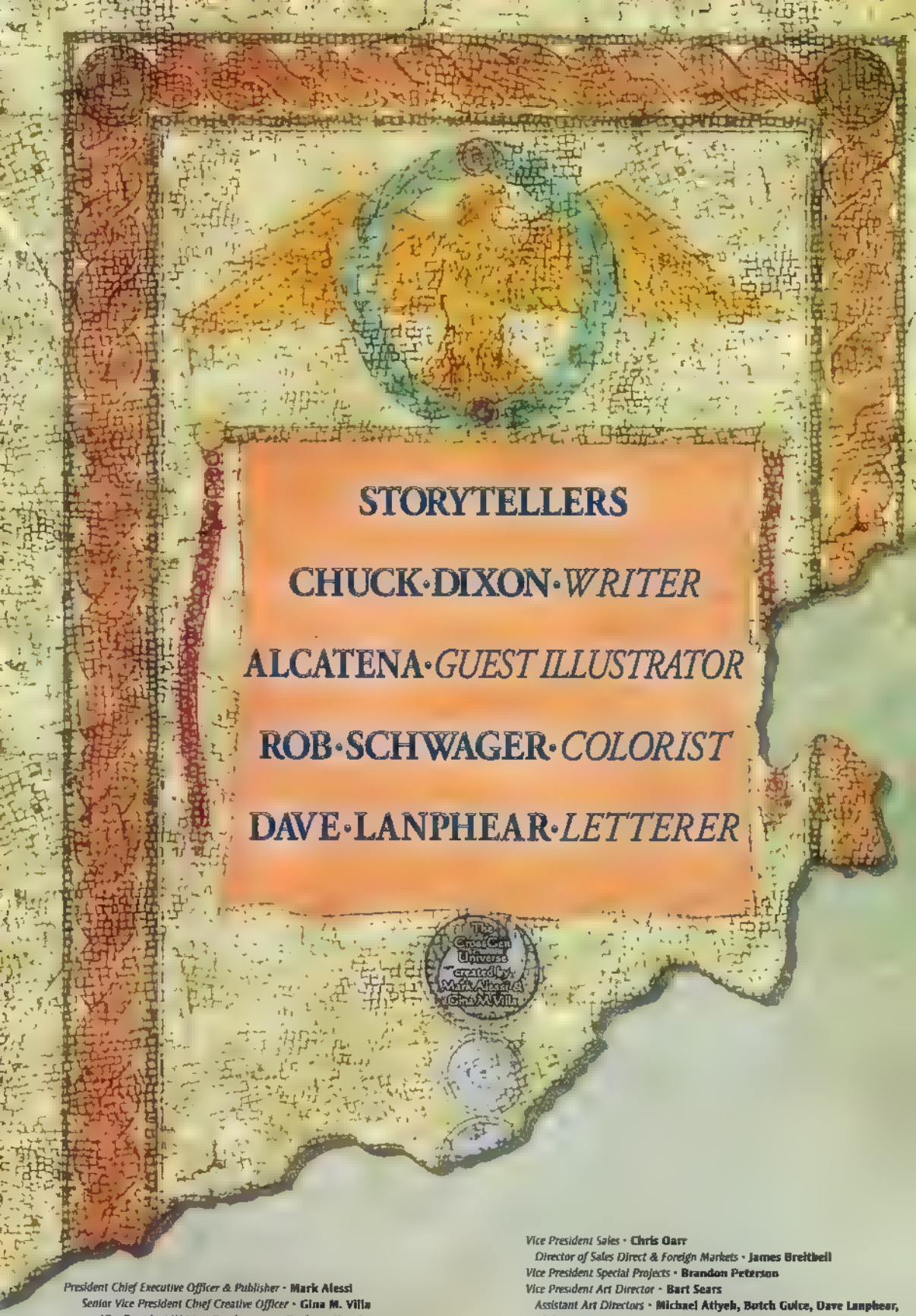
"BUT WHAT OF THE DAYS *TO COME?*

"SHOULD WE THINK OF STRONG *ALLIANCES* RATHER THAN STRONG WALLS?"


WOULD THIS BARBARIAN KING BOW TO MY POWER?
WOULD HE BECOME A FRIEND OF THE EMPIRE?
I CANNOT KNOW, DIVINITY
WERE WE TO OFFER HIM SOMETHING OTHER THAN HIS LIFE.
SOMETHING HE LOVED MORE.
GOLD? WE HAVE PILES OF IT. GEMS? A MOUNTAIN WILL BE HIS. HORSES? CATTLE?
A WOMAN PERHAPS. IS IT A WOMAN WHO WILL BE OUR COIN?
NO.
A SON.

CALM DOWN, DEAR HEART.
MOTHER...
HAVE SOME FRUIT
NO!
STOP PLAYING THE FOOL.
I AM *LOST*, MOTHER LOST.
LISTEN? *HEAR* THOSE VOICES? HEAR THE *MOB*?
THEY CHEER FOR *ULE* I *TOLD* YOU SHE WAS MAGNIFICENT
THEY SHOUT WITH ADULATION.
WITH WORSHIP
WITH *LOVE*.


"SOON IT WILL BE *YOUR* NAME THEY SHOUT, DEAR HEART."



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From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe the world is ruled by the emperor Quintillius Aurelius Galba Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. His taxes force citizens and subjects alike to finance the opulence and decadence of the great capital city. His slaves harvest grain, mine gold and silver and pull oars on his fleets of galleys. Only the gods sit in judgment of his august presence.

Yet one land and one people remain beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the throne of the great Quintillius. Led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen destroy every force set against them.

Touched by the mark of his chosen god, the Stag, Brath holds together an uneasy alliance of tribes and clans. Through visions, in which a stag shows him portents of future days, Brath sees the path that his people must follow if they are to remain free from the domination of their enemy.

His clans betrayed by the hated Mac Dools and defeated by the legions under General Vala, Brath Mac Garen is being transported to the seat of Empire and an audience with Quintillius himself.

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THE IRISIAN CHANNEL
WE SHOULD SEE LANDFALL BY AFTERNOON.
SCITERRA'S SHORE WILL BE A *WELCOME* SIGHT AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS.

TO SPEND SOME DAYS IN A *TRULY* CIVILIZED PLACE AFTER SO *LONG* IN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE BARBARIANS

DO *YOU* LOOK FORWARD TO A TASTE OF HOME, GENERAL VALA?

MY HOME IS IN A *BARRACKS*, DRUSUS. IT ALWAYS *WILL* BE

I SEE NO *POINT* IN THIS JOURNEY.

IT IS YOUR *TRIUMPH*, DEAR GENERAL.

YOU HAVE BROUGHT *LOW* THE HAMMER OF URE

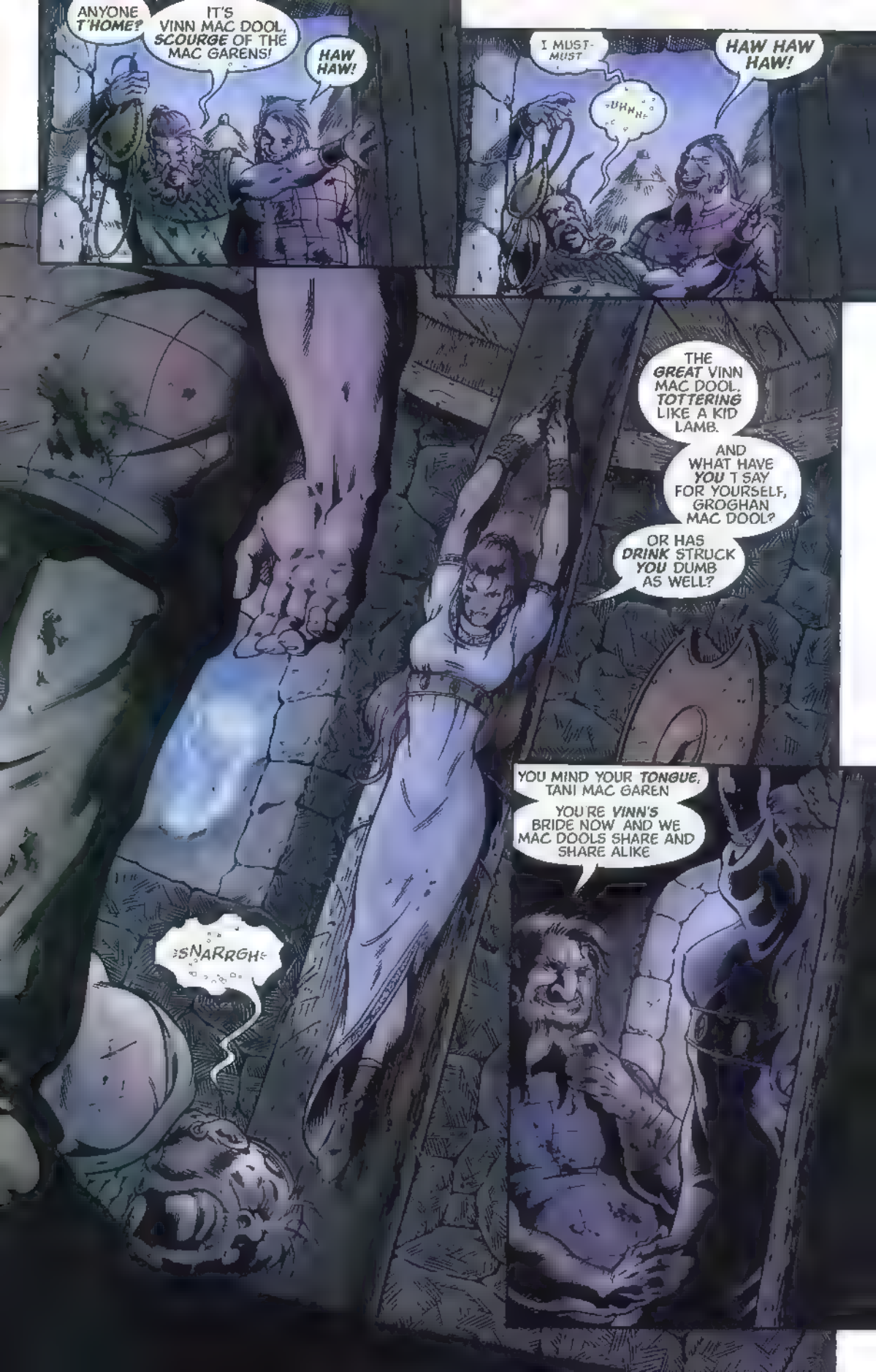
IT IS *FITTING* THAT YOU TAKE HIM FROM HIS FORMER LANDS.

WITH HIS CAPTURE, THE SPIRIT OF THE IRISIANS IS *BROKEN*.

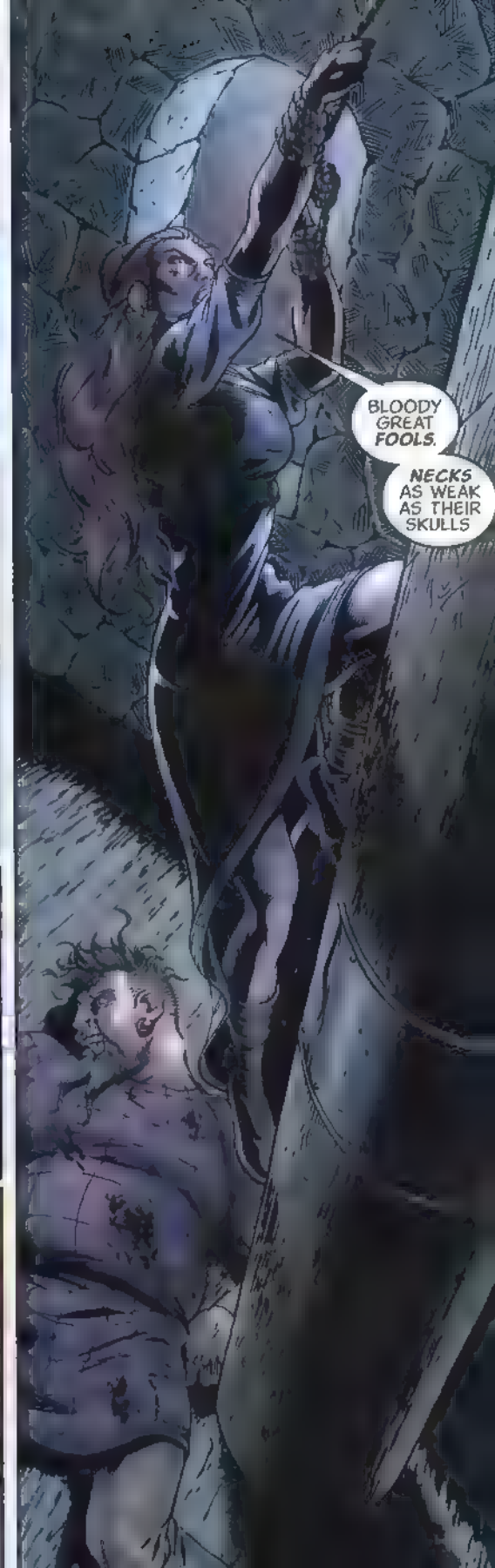
HOW *SIMPLE* TO BRING THEM TO HEEL NOW THAT THEIR KING IS SO SHAMED.

"LOOK UPON HIM; A THING OF PITY
"WITHOUT A FRIEND. WITHOUT A COMFORT
"WITHOUT HOPE."
TANI

"~WHAT OF YOU? WHAT OF DUN GAREN?"
DUN GAREN PRIDE OF THE MAC GARENS.
NOW MINE
M ONLY REGRET'S THAT I DID NOT SEE THAT STRUTTIN BRATH T'THE GRAVE MESELF.
AYE, VINN. BUT THE STEELBELLIES HAD THEIR PRICE.
THAT THEY DID, COUSIN. THEY HIED HIM AWAY T'THEIR CITY
HE'LL FACE THE JUDGMENT OF CIVILIZED MEN
YOU'RE DRUNK, COUSIN
AYE, BUT I'VE A VISIT T'MAKE


ANYONE T'HOME?
IT'S VINN MAC DOOL, SCOURGE OF THE MAC GARENS!
HAW HAW!
I MUST- MUST
UHHHH
HAW HAW HAW!
THE GREAT VINN MAC DOOL, TOTTERING LIKE A KID LAMB.
AND WHAT HAVE YOU T SAY FOR YOURSELF, GROGHAN MAC DOOL?
OR HAS DRINK STRUCK YOU DUMB AS WELL?
YOU MIND YOUR TONGUE, TANI MAC GAREN
YOU'RE VINN'S BRIDE NOW AND WE MAC DOOLS SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE
SNARRGH

YOU KNOW, I'VE ALWAYS *FANCIED* YOU, GROGHAN.
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU KNEW ME *NAME*, GIRL.
IF YOU WERE TO *UNTIE* ME--
NAY--
I CAN'T *DO* THAT, PRETTY
HOW VERY *SAD*, THEN--
--FOR *YOU*.
AGHK!


BLOODY GREAT *FOOLS*.
NECKS AS WEAK AS THEIR SKULLS

YOU'LL NOT BE *ACCOMPANYING* THIS WRETCH TO THE CAPITAL?

I LEAVE HIM IN *YOUR* HANDS. KNOW THAT THERE IS [redacted] *IMPERIAL* INTEREST IN THE MAN.

THE EMPEROR WANTS HIM *ALIVE*

WHO *IS* HE, THEN?

BRATH MAC GAREN OF THE URELANDS.

WE CALL HIM BRADMANACUS.

THE *MANKILLER*, EH? I'LL KEEP HIM BREATHING SO LONG AS HE *BEHAVES* HIMSELF

TOMORROW WE SAIL *BACK* TO IRISIA IF THE *PORTENTS* ARE GOOD, DRUSUS.

HOW COULD THE OMENS BE *SWEETER*, GENERAL?

IRISIA IS *OURS* FOR THE TAKING.

THE CLANS ARE *ROUTED*. THE HAIN AND CIMBRI AND CRUITHNI WILL *CRUMBLE* BEFORE US.

PAST LUCK IS NO *GUARANTEE* OF FUTURE FORTUNES, TRIBUNE.

"THERE IS MORE TO THE URELANDERS THAN ONE MAN."
IS IT MUCH FARTHER?
BE QUIET WE'RE DRUNKEN MAC DOOLS, RECALL
I SAW HER BROUGHT IN HERE.
THAT WAS HOURS AGO, COUSIN
OCH! IT'S VINN MAC DOOL HISSELF!
AND TANI NOWHERE T'BE SEEN. ONLY, I SAW HER--
BE SILENT THE PAIR OF YOU
TANI?
UH?

WAS I TO WAIT UNTIL YOU WEE LADS ARRIVED?
NOW TOSS ME A KNIFE SO WE CAN GET SHED OF THIS PLACE

TWO MEN DEAD AND YOU WITH HANDS BOUND–
~'TIS YOU SHOULD BE CALLED MANKILLER.
VINN IS ONLY DEAD DRUNK.
IT'S A WONDER THERE WAS EVER A SECOND GENERATION OF MAC DOOLS.
BUT I SWEAR THAT VINN WILL SIRE NO MORE PUPS.
THERE IS NO TIME, TAN!
BUT A SINGLE CUT AND~
WE MUST BE AWAY
BUCKIE IS WOUNDED AND THE SUN IS RISING
AYE, THE MAC DOOLS WILL BE ABOUT.
A SWORD, THEN AND SOME GOODS FOR THE JOURNEY

WHAT OF BRATH? HAVE YOU SEEN MY HUSBAND?
HE WAS ALIVE LAST WE KNEW
THE OUTLANDERS PRISONER, HE IS.
AND MY SON BRYLLIN?
I'VE NOT SEEN HIM
WE CANNOT LEAVE HIM, DER.
WE CAN ONLY HOPE HE ESCAPED, AS WE MUST.
HURRY!
WHAT IS TO BECOME OF US?
ARE THE MAC GARENS TO BE NO MORE?

"IS THE TIME OF THE CLANS *OVER?*"
THE MOON GODDESS *CEDES* HER THRONE.
THE USURPING STAR *STEALS* FROM HER THE SKY.
BUT SOON--*VERY* SOON, ALL OF THAT WILL *CHANGE*
WHEN WE REACH THE LAND OF THE CRUITHI WE SHALL HAVE A *SACRIFICE*.
AND THE SUN WILL BE *FOREVER* DARKENED--
--IN *BLOOD*.
THE BLOOD OF THE *MAC GARENS*.
IT RUNS STRONG IN YOUNG BRYLLIN; THE OFFSPRING OF *BRATH*

"STRONG ENOUGH TO RETURN US TO A WORLD OF ETERNAL NIGHT"
GOING HOME, EH?
NOT ME. I'M FROM PANIA.
AH, A NORTHERN LAD, THEN YOUR WOMEN ARE FAIR.
SO, OLD QUINTILLIUS WANTS THE WRETCH ALIVE
I WOULD HATE TO BE IN HIS BOOTS, I WOULD.
HEAR THAT, MANKILLER?
YOU'RE FOR THE BELLY OF A LION, OR WORSE.
UH?

HEY!
DARIO! BE WARY!
-GUHHK-
UNNH!
WHAT IS THIS?
YOU IDIOTS STAY AWAY FROM THE CAGE!

IT WILL BE MY HEAD ON A TRAY SHOULD YOU BE HARMED!
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE EMPEROR HAS PLANNED FOR YOU--
=UNNH!=
ARRRGH
--BUT BEATEN, BRUISED OR BATTERED--
--YOU'LL STILL BE BREATHING WHEN WE REACH THE CAPITAL GATES!

"...THOUGH YOU MIGHT WISH *OTHERWISE.*"
RHORAN~
IS THERE NAUGHT WE CAN *DO?*
NOT WITH SO MANY STEELHELMS ABOUT
OUR PEOPLE ARE *STRONG.* THEY'LL *SURVIVE* THE MINES~

"--UNTIL THE MAC GARENS ARE *UNITED* ONCE MORE."

AVE, CITIZEN!

YOU BRING THE IMPERIAL *PRISONER?*

I AM BEING *PAID* TO BRING HIM TO QUINTILLIUS *HIMSELF*

I AM A *TRIBUNE* OF HIS DIVINE EMPEROR'S PERSONAL GUARD.

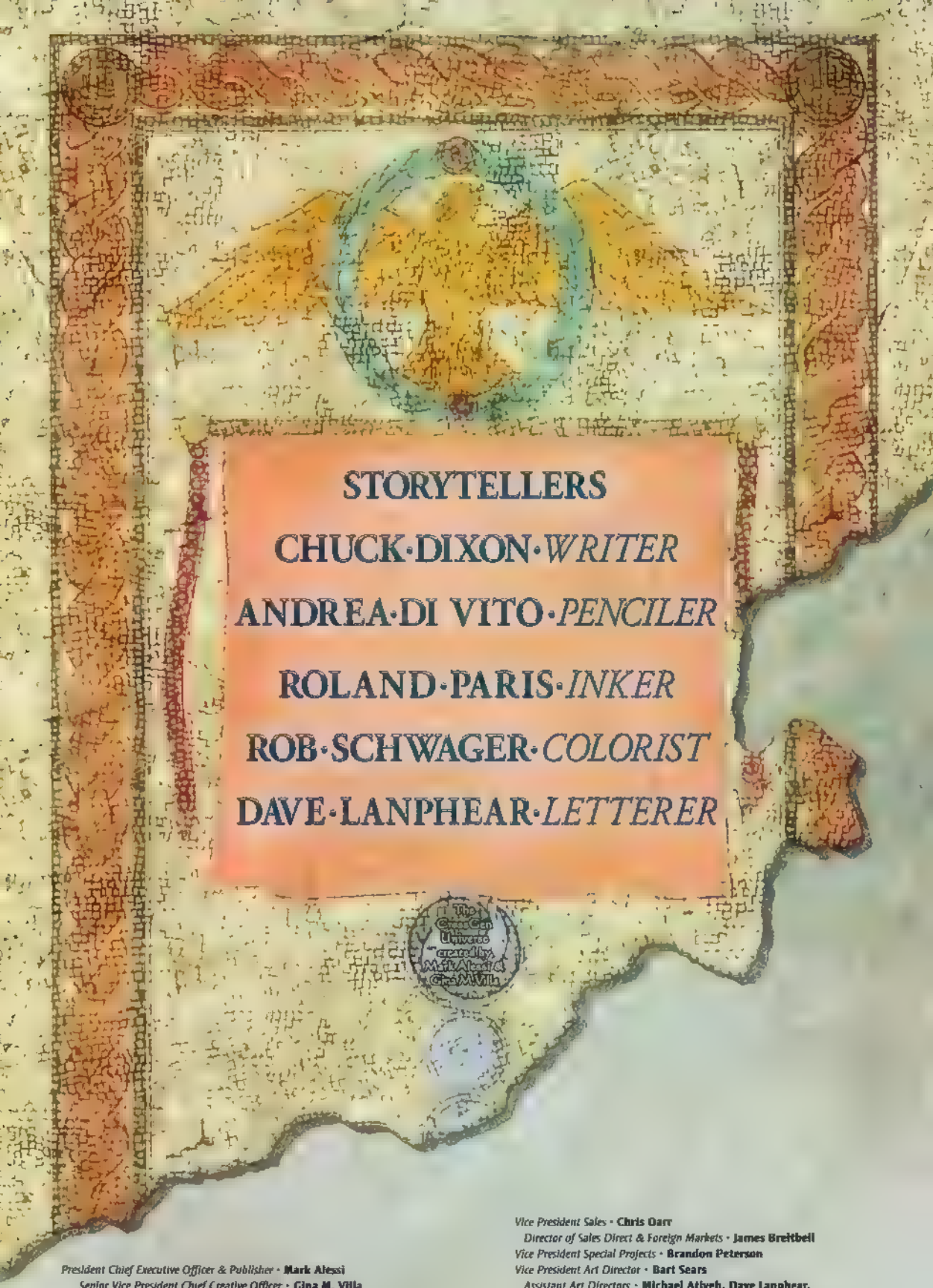
I WILL TAKE THE DOG FROM HERE.

AND MY *GOLD?*

YOU *WILL* BE PAID, TYBERIAN.

BUT THIS IS NO COMMON *CARGO* YOU HAUL~

"HE IS AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE EMPIRE.
"HE WILL WALK TO HIS FATE IN SIGHT OF THE MOB.
"HIS LAST SIGHTS WILL BE THE MIGHT AND THE SCORN OF THOSE HE WAS BRAZEN ENOUGH TO OPPOSE."



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"A VIVIDLY-IMAGINED WORLD OF LOVE, DEATH, AND SURVIVAL." — *Comix View*

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Touched by the mark of his chosen god, the Stag, Brath holds together an uneasy alliance of tribes and clans. Through visions, in which a stag shows him portents of future days, Brath sees the path that his people must follow if they are to remain free from the domination of their enemy.

Following the defeat of the Mac Garens, Brath is brought in chains before the Emperor Quintillius. But the encounter will not be what he expects.

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TONIGHT, CLAN MAC GAREN IS NO MORE!
TONIGHT, CLAN MAC DOOL IS VICTORIOUS!
TONIGHT, DUN GAREN BURNS!

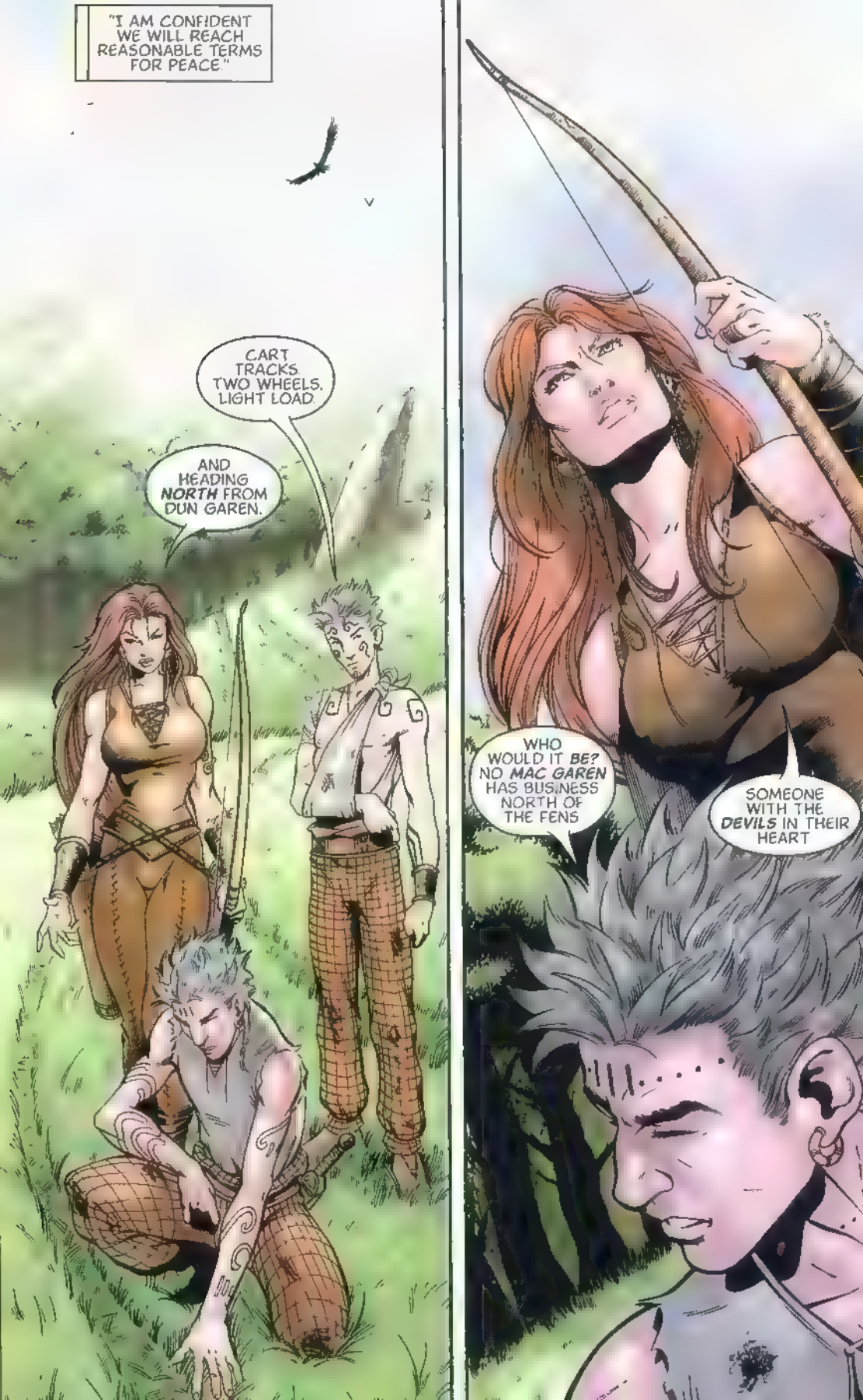
AND WHEN THIS HOME OF BRATH'S IS BUT CINDERS--
--WE WILL HUNT DOWN THAT MURDERING WIFE OF HIS!
DUN GAREN IS NO MORE BRATH IS TAKEN BY THE OUTLANDERS. MY SON HAS DISAPPEARED.
THE MAC DOOLS WILL BE SEEKING YOU, TANI.
NAY, BROTHER THEY'LL DRINK THEMSELVES STUPID AND SWEAR BLOODY OATHS.
THE MAC DOOL RAGE BURNS HOT BUT FAST
WE'VE NO HOME NO CLAN. WHERE ARE WE OFF TO, THEN?
WE FIND MY SON. WE FIND BRYLLIN MAC GAREN
OH, BRATH--

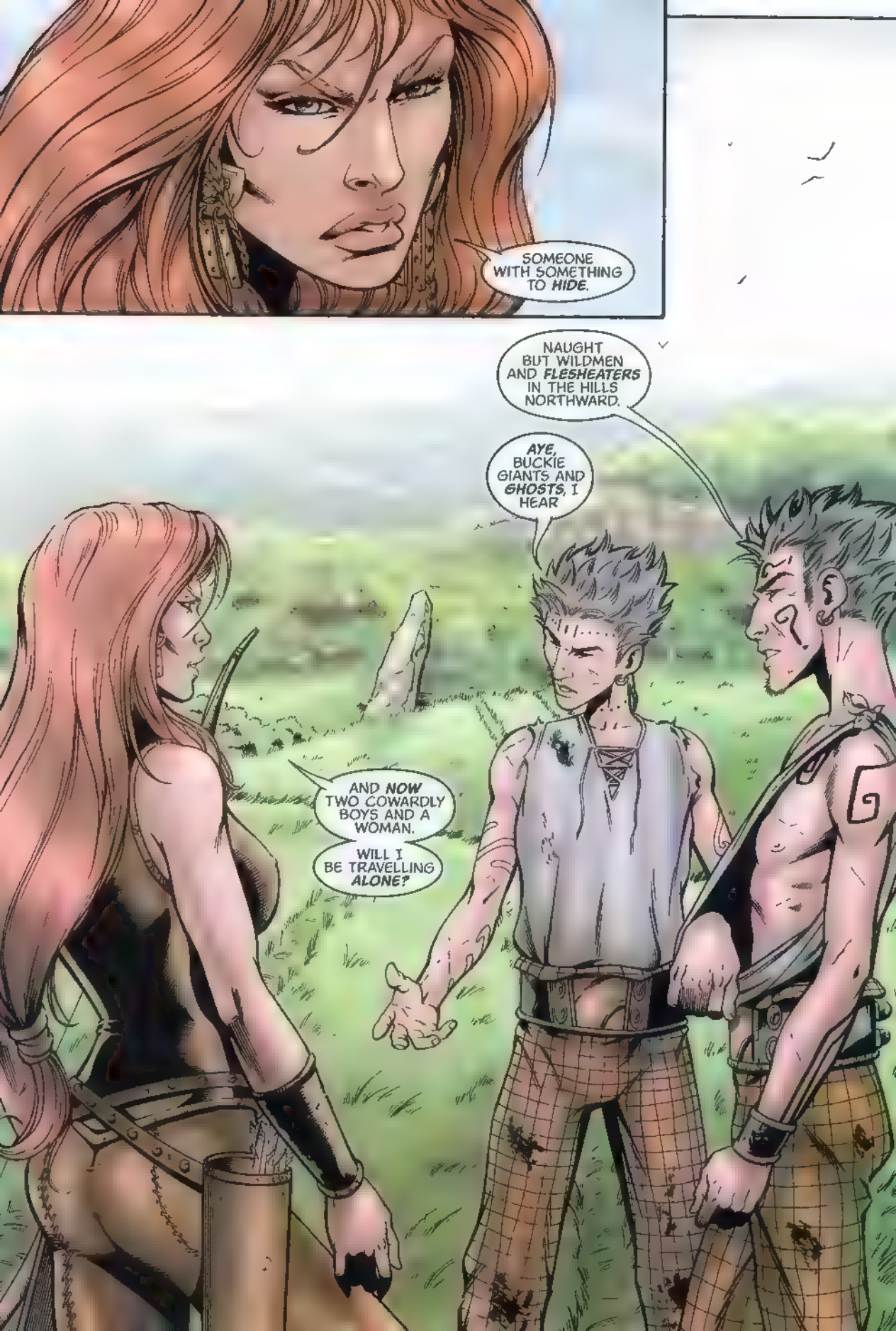
"--IT IS THE MERCY OF THE GODS YOU NOT *WITNESS* THIS MISERY"
COME *ALONG* THEN, ANIMAL!
EMPEROR *QUINTILLIUS* BEGS YOUR COMPANY
HE'LL CHANGE HIS MIND WHEN HE GETS A *WHIFF* OF THIS BEAST
NO *MATTER*, EH? HE'LL STINK LIKE THE *DEAD* SOON ENOUGH
HA!
WHAT *OUTRAGE* IS THIS?
IS *THIS* BRADMANACUS? KNOWN AS *THE MANKILLER?*

YES, YOUR SUPREMACY THIS IS THE IRISIAN CAPTURED AND BROUGHT BEFORE YOU
YOU DELIVER HIM THUS? IN RAGS? COVERED IN THE FILTH OF THE ROAD?
THIS MAN IS A KING IN HIS LAND--WORTHY OF THE RESPECT THAT COMES WITH THAT OFFICE!
WE WERE TOLD ONLY TO -
IDIOTS! CUT THIS MAN'S BONDS! HE IS NO CHATTEL!
MY APOLOGIES FOR THIS HUMILIATION BRADMANACUS
HE'S DANGEROUS, MY EMPEROR!
AM I A WOMAN? A DEFENSELESS CHILD?
I AM CALLED BRATH

I SHALL CALL YOU BRATH.
I AM QUINTILLIUS GALBA AURELIUS CYTHICA REX TOO MANY NAMES
IN BATTLE, I WAS CALLED GALBA BY COMRADE AND FOE ALIKE.
I HAD YOU BROUGHT TO ME TO SHOW YOU THE POWER OF MY EMPIRE.
A POWER YOU MIGHT SHARE IN. I EXTEND AN INVITATION TO YOU AND YOUR TRIBES.
I DO NOT CARE FOR YOUR INVITATION
SEE THIS HUMBLE DATE, BRATH?
IT WAS BROUGHT TO THIS CITY OVER IMPERIAL ROADS FROM FAR TULUS.
IT IS STILL FRESH
ALL OVER THE EMPIRE, MY SUBJECTS AND CITIZENS LIVE UNDER ONE LAW ONE LANGUAGE.
AS SLAVES.

AS FREE PEOPLE, A FREEDOM BACKED BY MY LEGIONS
AND CRUSHED BY THEM, SHOULD YOU SO CHOOSE
THINK OF YOUR PEOPLE I OFFER THEM MEDICINE, LITERATURE, ART AND ALL THE BENEFITS OF EMPIRE.
AS MEMBERS OF THE EMPIRE THEY WOULD LIVE BETTER LIVES
ALL THIS I LAY AT YOUR FEET, BRATH.
I AM YOUR PRISONER MY PEOPLE ARE SCATTERED IN DEFEAT NO MATTER MY ANSWER, YOU WILL DO AS YOU WILL.
HA! A STOIC LIKE MYSELF
MANY OF MY CLOSEST FRIENDS I FIRST MET, AND DEFEATED, ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE.
CONSIDER MY OFFER WHILE YOU HAVE A BATH AND A CHANGE OF CLOTHES, BRATH.
AND REJOIN ME THIS EVENING FOR DINNER.


"I AM CONFIDENT WE WILL REACH REASONABLE TERMS FOR PEACE."
CART TRACKS. TWO WHEELS. LIGHT LOAD.
AND HEADING *NORTH* FROM DUN GAREN.
WHO WOULD IT *BE?* NO *MAC GAREN* HAS BUSINESS NORTH OF THE FENS
SOMEONE WITH THE *DEVILS* IN THEIR HEART


SOMEONE WITH SOMETHING TO *HIDE*.
NAUGHT BUT WILDMEN AND *FLESHEATERS* IN THE HILLS NORTHWARD.
AYE, BUCKIE GIANTS AND *GHOSTS*, I HEAR
AND *NOW* TWO COWARDLY BOYS AND A WOMAN.
WILL I BE TRAVELLING *ALONE?*

"OR DOES THE BLOOD OF THE MAC GARENS STILL MOVE IN YOUR VEINS?"
REALLY, UNCLE--
--A BARBARIAN.
HE IS A LORD IN HIS OWN LAND, PRISCUS.
A PLACE OF MUD HUTS AND ILLITERATE SAVAGES.
SAVAGES WHO SLAUGHTERED A LEGION.
BUT TO ALLOW ONE OF THEM AT YOUR TABLE--
OUR FRONTIERS GROW EACH YEAR.
STRONG ALLIES, EVEN UNCOUTH ONES, ON OUR BORDERS MEAN STABILITY.
PEACE IS ALWAYS CHEAPER THAN WAR, NEPHEW
YOU'D BEST LEARN THAT IF YOU ARE TO BE EMPEROR ONE DAY.
YES, UNCLE. ONE DAY.

WHAT IS THIS? YOU BRING AN ARMED MAN INTO MY HOME?
HIS NAME IS VULPUS. HE'S KILLED THIRTY MEN IN THE ARENA.
I'M NOT CERTAIN HOW MANY OUTSIDE
YOU'D SPILL IMPERIAL BLOOD TO TAKE MY PLACE?
THE CITIZENS WILL RIOT. THE ARMY WILL MUTINY.
YOU WILL NOT WEAR MY LAURELS FROM ONE SUN TO THE NEXT.
THEY WILL DO AS THEY ARE TOLD.
LUCIUS!
YOU TRULY THINK THE LEGIONS WILL STAND BEHIND AN EMPEROR WHO WOULD OFFER PEACE TO A DEFEATED BARBARIAN?
HAVE I LEARNED ENOUGH, UNCLE?

"OR HAVE YOU ANY FINER POINTS TO IMPART BEFORE YOUR FAREWELL?"
DOES THE WATER SUIT YOU? DO YOU WISH IT PERFUMED?
DO YOU WISH ME TO DROWN YOU?
AH. THEN IT IS SATISFACTORY.
WHEN WILL THE EMPEROR SEE ME?
I AM NOT PRIVILEGED WITH THAT INFORMATION
I ONLY KNOW THAT I AM TO SEE TO YOUR EVERY NEED.
WHAT IS THIS?

A WOMAN. YOU BARBARIANS DO HAVE THEM, DON'T YOU?
I HAVE A WOMAN.
AWAY FROM ME.

BRADMANACUS OF THE IRISII!
THE EMPEROR COMMANDS YOUR PRESENCE!
AM I TO APPEAR NAKED BEFORE HIM?
OR HAVE YOU CLOTHING FOR ME?
YOU'RE AN ARROGANT ONE, EH?
ONE OF YOU LOT GO TO STORES AND GET THIS - MAN - A TUNIC AND BREECHES.

PUSH ME ONLY SO *FAR*, ANIMAL. I'VE FOUGHT *YOUR* KIND IN THE FORESTS OF KUNOW.
THEY WERE *ALEMANNI*, NO *RELATION* TO MY PEOPLE.
THEY RAN IN THE SAME WAY.
JUST AS YOU AND YOUR *COUSINS* RAN FROM THE ELEVENTH
THIS IS NOT WHERE QUINTILLIUS RECEIVED ME *BEFORE*
WELL, HE'S THE *EMPEROR*, ISN'T HE?
HE CAN SEE YOU ANYWHERE HE *PLEASES*
INSIDE, ANIMAL.

YOUR *DIVINE* MAJESTY, I PRESENT *BRADMANACUS, WARLORD* OF MAGGARAI, *HAMMER* OF URE.

HE IS NOT ON HIS *KNEES*, CENTURION.

HE IS NOT TO *STAND* BEFORE YOUR EMPEROR AND GOD.

YOU ARE NOT~

≥UNNH!≤

YOU MAY NOT *SPEAK* TO HIS DIVINITY!

SPEAK *AGAIN* AND SUFFER FOR IT, ANIMAL

≥HUNH!≤

URRK≥≤

HE KILLED MARIUS!
BRING HIM DOWN!
YOU DIE NOW, ANIMAL!

NO!
I WANT HIM TO LIVE

THERE IS A NEW ORDER IN THE EMPIRE, BRADMANACUS.
QUINTILLIUS GALBA NO LONGER SITS UPON THE THRONE

IT IS GAIUS METALLUS PRISCUS DEIUS REX WHO NOW WEARS THE LAUREL.
AND ANY AGREEMENTS YOU HAD WITH MY UNCLE ARE VOID

WHAT ARE WE TO *DO* WITH HIM, DIVINE PRISCUS?
HE FIGHTS *WELL*
LOOK IN MY *EYES*, URELANDER
I SAID *LOOK* AT ME!
WHEN *NEXT* I SEE YOU IT WILL BE ON THE SAND OF THE CIRCUS
YOU WILL FIGHT AND YOU WILL *DIE* FOR MY AMUSEMENT
AND AS PART OF MY DEAR UNCLE'S *FUNERAL*

"YOU MAY CONTINUE YOUR PARLAYS WITH HIM IN THE *NEXT* WORLD."
I AM *CINNTRA* OF THE DARK MOON GODDESS.
SHOW YOURSELVES.
I COME TO THE LAND OF THE *CRUITH!* WITH A *GIFT*.
SHOW THEM THE *BOY*, LITTLE ONE

UH!
OW!
HURRROOOOOO!
NOW BEGINS THE DAYS OF MOON FIRE.
THE RETURN TO THE DAYS OF SACRIFICE.
SOON, VERY SOON, MY SONS--

"...THE SKY WILL BE BATHED IN *BLOOD*."

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ANDREA·DI VITO·*PENCILER*

ROLAND·PARIS·*INKER*

ROB·SCHWAGER·*COLORIST*

DAVE·LANPHEAR·*LETTERER*

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BRATH

Chuck Dixon
Andrea Di Vito
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From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe the world is ruled by the emperor Gaius Metallus Priscus Deius Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. His taxes force citizens and subjects alike to finance the opulence and decadence of the great capital city. His slaves harvest grain, mine gold and silver and pull oars on his fleets of galleys. Only the gods sit in judgement of his august presence.

Yet one land and one people remain beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the throne of the great Priscus Rex. Once led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen have been devastated on the battlefield by the Emperor's legions.

Quintillius is dead and the new emperor is the mad Priscus. Brath is his prisoner and is slated to die in the arena. In Ureland, the legions continue to oppress the clans even as Brath's wife Tani searches for their lost son.

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ENOUGH OF THIS DELAY!
BRING ON THE IRISIAN WARLORD! I WANT TO SEE HIM HOWL FOR MERCY!
PLEASE, PRISCUS. IT IS UNSEEMLY FOR THE PEOPLE TO SEE THEIR EMPEROR ACTING SO.

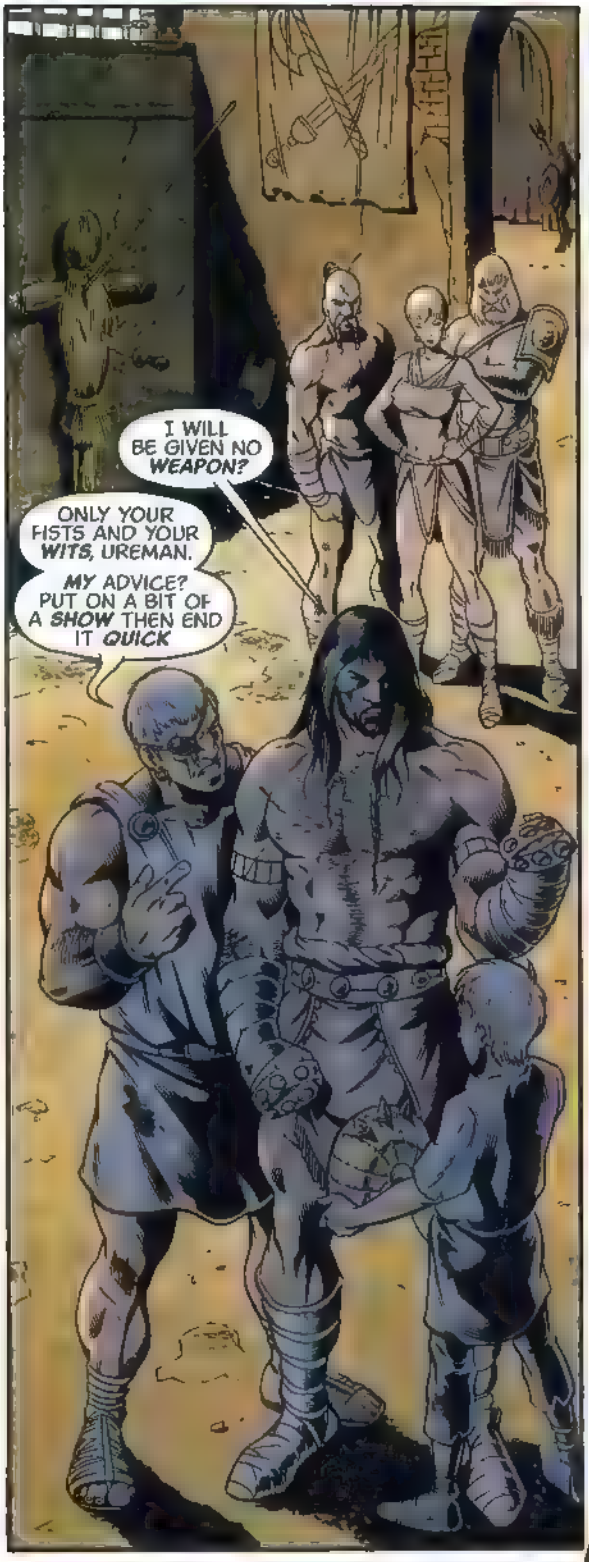
QUIET, MOTHER.

I DO NOT *INTEND* TO BE THE SORT OF LEADER MY UNCLE WAS.

THOUGH I AM THEIR KING AND THEIR GOD, I SHALL DISPLAY *INTEREST* IN THEIR PLEBIAN PASTTIMES.

REMOVE THIS TRAVESTY FROM THE SAND!

GAAAH!
UNNH!
I TIRE OF BEARS!
I DEMAND BRADMANACUS!


I WILL BE GIVEN NO *WEAPON?*
ONLY YOUR FISTS AND YOUR *WITS*, UREMAN.
MY ADVICE? PUT ON A BIT OF A *SHOW* THEN END IT *QUICK*

<THE IRISI IS A DEAD MAN, NO?>
<A PITY TO *SPEND* SUCH A MAN CHEAPLY.>

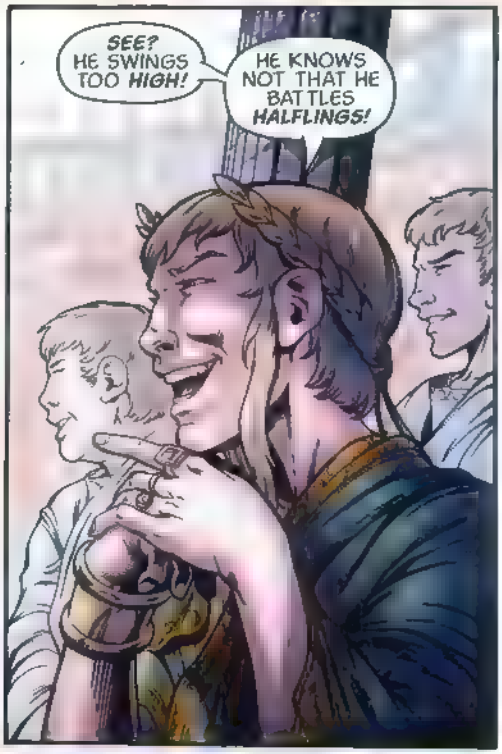
<I DO NOT *INTEND* TO DIE TODAY, WOMAN.>
<YOU SPEAK *EREMANNI*?>
<I LEARN QUICKLY>

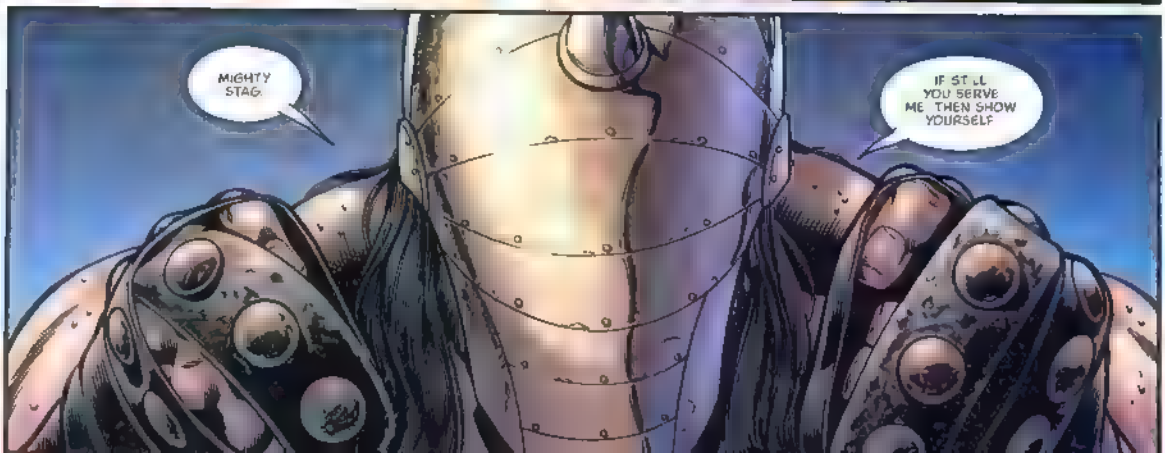
THE HELMET SERVES TO *BLIND* YOU.
LISTEN TO ME AND YOUR DEATH WILL BE *EASIER.*

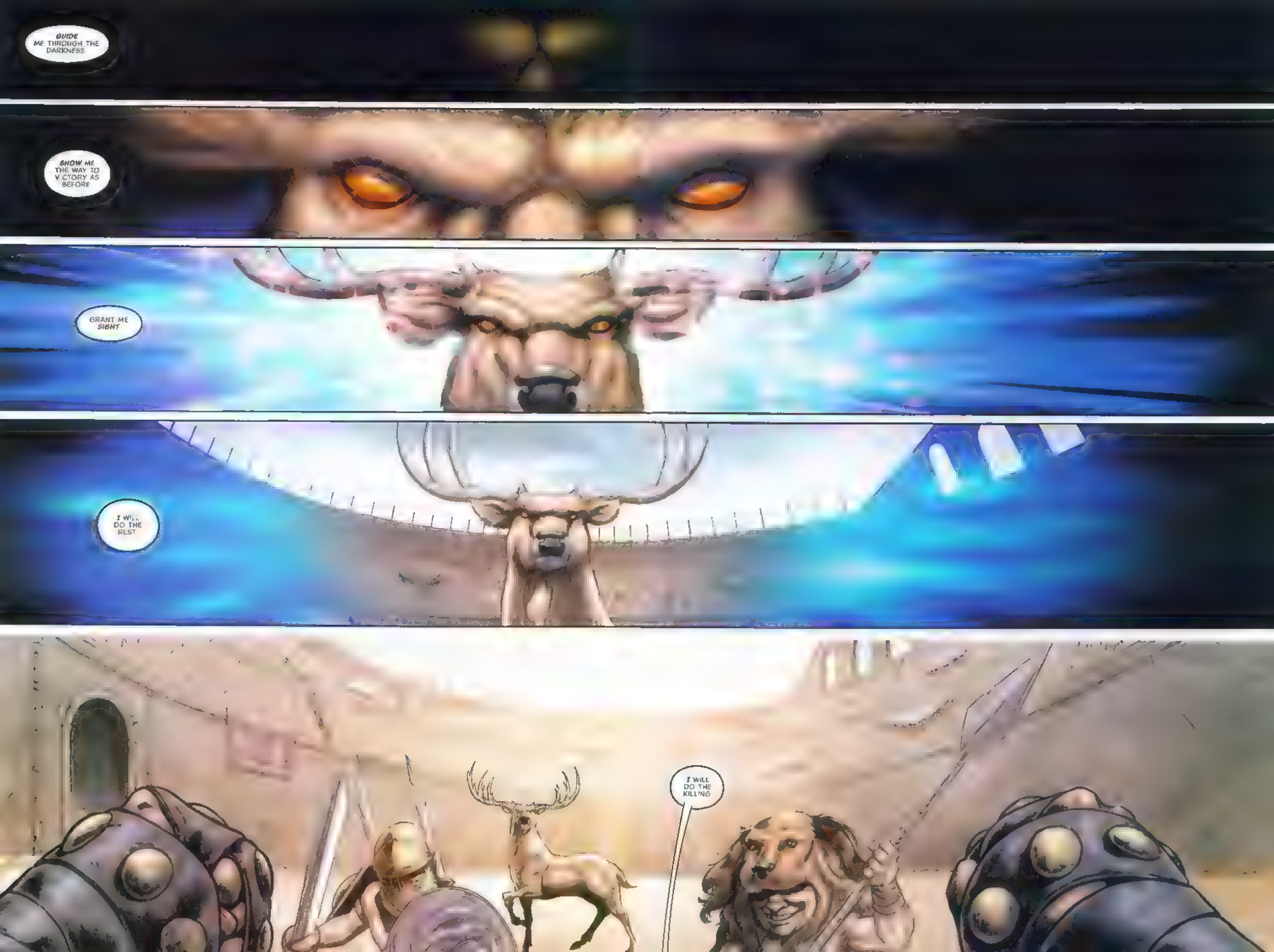
"YOU WILL BE *LED* FROM HERE TO THE ARENA PROPER
"YOU WILL KNOW BY THE HEAT OF THE *SAND* BENEATH YOUR SANDALS THAT YOUR ACT IS ON.
"THE CROWD IS *ANTICIPATING* YOU.
"YOU ARE A COMMAND PERFORMER AT THE BEHEST OF THE *EMPEROR*.
"YOU WILL BE *OUTNUMBERED* BY OPPONENTS THAT YOU WILL BE UNABLE TO SEE.
"THE MOB WILL BE *AMUSED* BY THIS.
"YOUR DEATH IS TO BE A *COMEDY*"

UH!

WHUH!
HOO!


SEE? HE SWINGS TOO HIGH!
HE KNOWS NOT THAT HE BATTLES HALFLINGS!


MIGHTY STAG
IF STILL YOU SERVE ME THEN SHOW YOURSELF


GUIDE ME THROUGH THE DARKNESS
SHOW ME THE WAY TO VICTORY AS BEFORE
GRANT ME SIGHT
I WILL DO THE REST
I WILL DO THE KILLING

HUNH!
WHUH?
HURRH!
GAHK!
AAAAH!

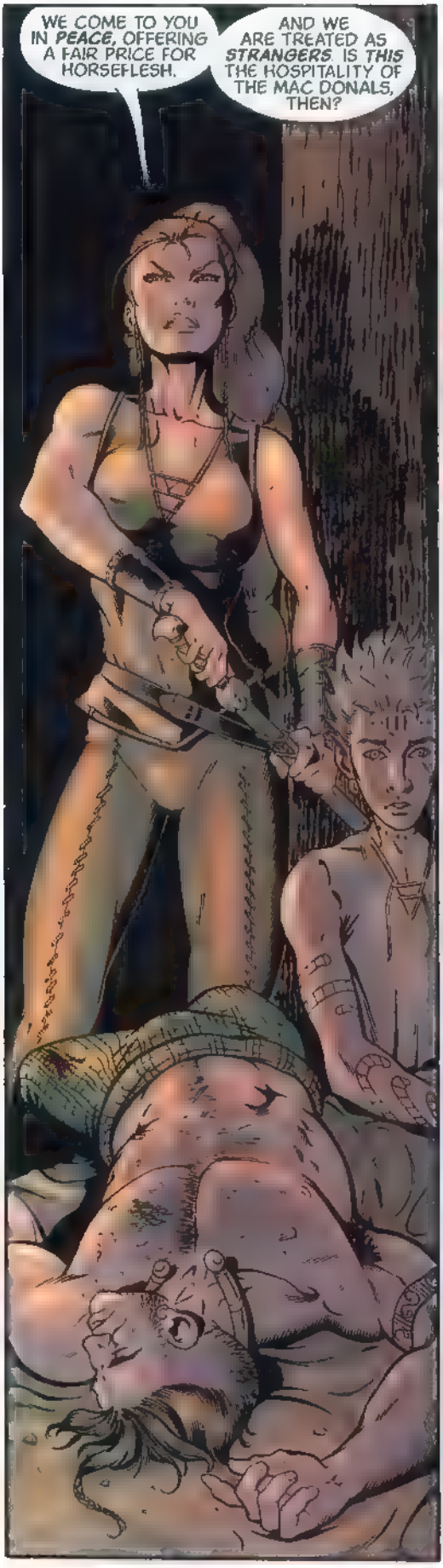
"WHAT IS THIS? HE IS SUPPOSED TO DIE!"
I ORDERED HIS HUMILIATION!
BUT LOOK AT THE LITTLE MEN RUN, PRISCUS!
EVEN BLINDED, THE BARBARIAN IS VICTORIOUS!
FOOLS!
I SAY I DID NOT ASK FOR THIS!
DO YOU MOCK ME? AM I A SOURCE OF AMUSEMENT?
OUR APOLOGIES, YOUR DIVINITY--
UH!
"--BUT AS YOU SEE, THE IRISIAN IS FORMIDABLE."

"THE MOB ADORES HIM."
BRAD-MANACUS!
BRAD-MANACUS!
BRAD-MANACUS!

UNWASHED, UNEDUCATED IMBECILES!
I RULE OVER MORONS!
WHAT OF IT, DEAR SON? THIS BESTIAL SCUM WILL DIE ANOTHER DAY.
OH, MOTHER--
--I SO LOOKED FORWARD TO THIS.
"AND NOW HE IS A HERO TO THEM"
I KNOW NOT WHAT GOD YOU HEED--
--BUT HE HEARD YOUR PRAYERS THIS AFTERNOON
<THE IRISIAN IS A FIGHTER TO WATCH, YES?>
<MORE THAN WATCH, MY FRIEND-->

"--A MAN TO KNOW"
WE WISH TO PURCHASE PONIES.
YOU ARE OF THE MAC GARENS
I AM TANI MAC GAREN, WIFE OF BRATH.
THESE ARE MY COUSINS, DER AND BUCKIE
I HAD HEARD THAT THE MAC GARENS ARE NO MORE. SLAIN, SCATTERED OR ENSLAVED BY THE STEELBELLIES
AND YOUR MAN, THE HAMMER OF URE, TAKEN AWAY, LIKE A GOAT TO MARKET.
AND YOU WANDER INTO MY LANDS SEEKING MOUNTS?
WE CAN PAY FOR THEM.
YOU ARE SEEKING YOUR SON, HEIR TO BRATH.
IT IS NO SECRET THE WIND WHISPERS OF IT. OF WHAT USE IS YOUR BOY NOW? HE INHERITS A CLAN IN NAME ONLY

THE MAC GARENS ARE NOT GONE
A WOMAN AND TWO WELPS IS ALL I SEE
WOULD THIS ONE NOT MAKE A FINE WIFE, FATHER?
IS THAT A PROPOSAL, LONIE MAC DONAL?
AND HOW WILL WE SEAL SUCH A PROMISE?
UH?
WITH A DRAUGHT?
UHN!


WE COME TO YOU IN *PEACE*, OFFERING A FAIR PRICE FOR HORSEFLESH.
AND WE ARE TREATED AS *STRANGERS*. IS *THIS* THE HOSPITALITY OF THE MAC DONALS, THEN?

YOU *ARE* A FITTING MATE FOR BRATH MAC GAREN, LASS.

THREE OF OUR STURDIEST PONIES, AND I'LL THROW IN A RASHER O' SALT MEAT AND A BAG O' FEED.
MAKE IT *TWO* RASHERS AND WE'LL BE ON OUR WAY
TWO IT *IS*, LASS.

"AND MAY FORTUNE *BRING* YOU TO YOUR SON'S SIDE."
WE RIDE *NORTH*

"THROUGH THE LAND OF THE HAIN AND BEYOND."
AND YOU PLAY A PART AS WELL, MY LITTLE FRIEND.
YOU ARE THE CATALYST IN MY SCHEMES.
WHEN THE SUN RISES FOR THE LAST TIME AND HIGHLANDS ARE DRENCHED IN BLOOD--
~BRYLLIN, SON OF BRATH, WILL BE AT THE CENTER OF IT ALL.
I'M NOT GOING TO HELP YOU, CINNTRA!
YOU WILL NOT HAVE A CHOICE, BOY.
YOUR HERITAGE CONDEMNS YOU
THOUGH A CHILD, THE HEART OF A WARRIOR BEATS WITHIN YOU.

IT IS THE TIME OF THE MOON'S *WANING*.

THE GODDESS OF THE NIGHT *HIDES* IN THE SKY ABOVE.

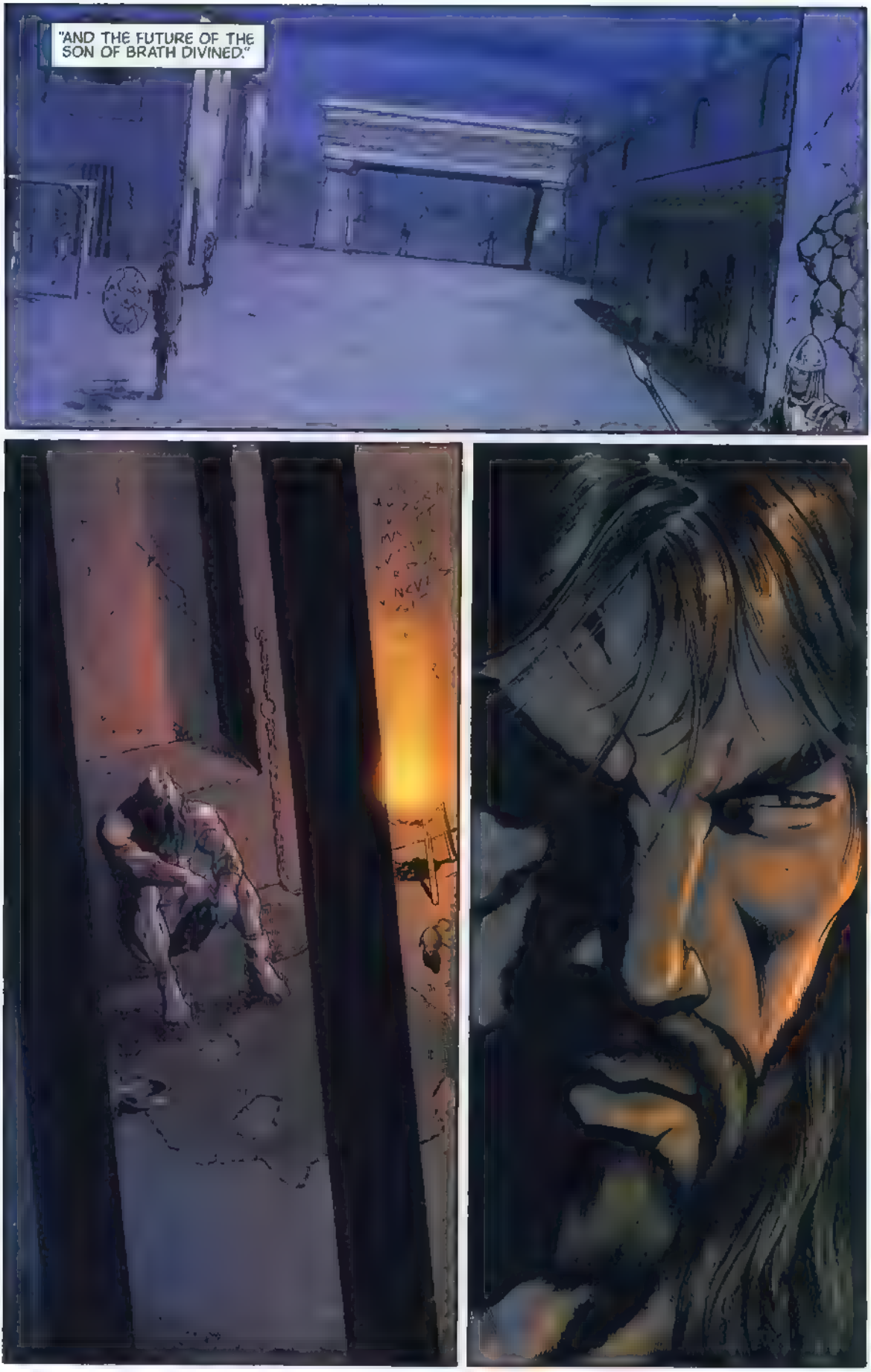
WRAPPED IN A VEIL OF STARS.

SHE *FEARS* FOR HER CHILDREN.

LIGHT THE WORLD WITH YOUR FIRE! LET THE DARK GODDESS *SEE* YOUR JOY!

SCION WE WILL DRIVE THE USURPING STAR FROM THE HEAVENS.

THEN THE BLANKET OF NIGHT WILL COVER *ALL!*


"AND THE FUTURE OF THE SON OF BRATH DIVINED."

‹OH!›
‹YOUR NAME IS ULE, IS IT NOT?›
‹LET GO OF ME.›
‹WHY HAVE YOU COME HERE?›
‹YOU TRULY DO NOT KNOW?›
‹YOUR PEOPLE WERE CRUSHED BY THE STEELHELMS AS MINE WERE.›
‹THE EREMANNI ALLIED THEMSELVES WITH THE EMPEROR.›
‹THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE? A SLAVE, AN ENTERTAINMENT.›
‹MY FATHER IS A CHIEFTAIN. MY PRESENCE HERE ASSURES HIS LOYALTY.›
‹A HOSTAGE THEN.›
‹YOU MIGHT DIE ANY DAY IN THESE COMBATS.›
‹THAT IS MY CHOICE. I WOULD NOT BE A CONCUBINE OR A HOUSE MAID.›
‹AND WHY DO YOU COME TO ME?›

〈AS YOU SAID, WE MIGHT DIE ANY DAY〉
〈I HAVE A WOMAN.〉
〈FAR AWAY, BRADMANACUS. SHE DOES NOT MATTER.〉
〈SHE MATTERS TO ME〉
-UHN!-
〈YOU HAVE MADE A GRAVE ERROR, IRISIAN〉
〈A GLADIATOR WITHOUT FRIENDS DIES SOONER.〉
〈KNOW THEN THAT I WILL NOT DIE ALONE.〉

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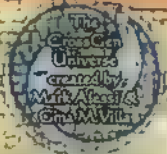
ANDREA·DI VITO·*PENCILER*

ROLAND·PARIS·*INKER*

ROB·SCHWAGER·*COLORIST*

DAVE·LANPHEAR·*LETTERER*



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PREVIOUSLY IN BRATH

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One land and one people remained beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continued to defy the throne of the great Priscus Rex. Once led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen have been devastated on the battlefield by the Emperor's legions.

Brath continues to defy the will of the Emperor by surviving against all odds in the arena. But young Priscus is determined to see the mob's new favorite die upon the circus sand.

Storytellers

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ANDREA DI VITO
Penciler

ROLAND PARIS
Inker (Pages 21-23)

ROB SCHWAGER
Digital Inks & Colorist

DAVE LANPHEAR
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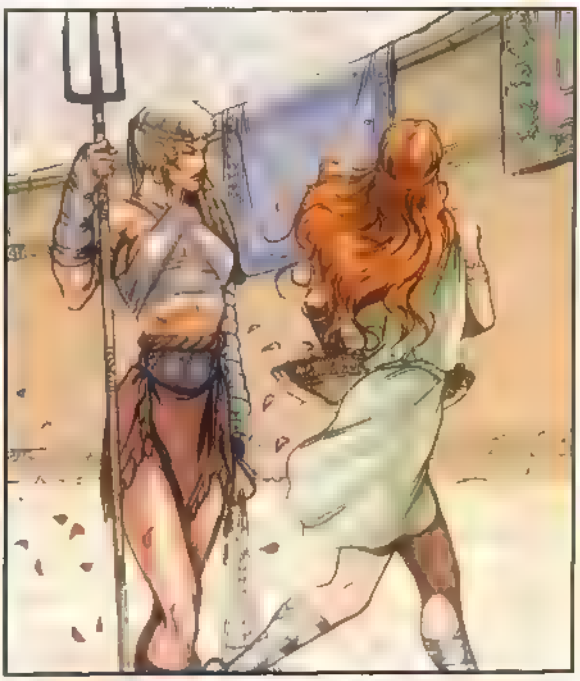
FROM THE CODEX PRISCUS REX OF VERMINUS ACTA

QUINTILLIUS GALBA REX JOINED THE GODS IN THE SUMMER OF THAT YEAR. HIS IMPERIAL DEITY ANTONIUS PRISCUS GAIUS RECEIVED THE LAUREL WREATH OF EMPEROR THE PASSING KING'S FUNERAL WAS A PRIVATE AFFAIR FOR THE FLAVIAN FAMILY ALONE. THE NEW RULER ORDERED THREE DAYS OF GAMES IN HONOR OF HIS UNCLE'S MEMORY.

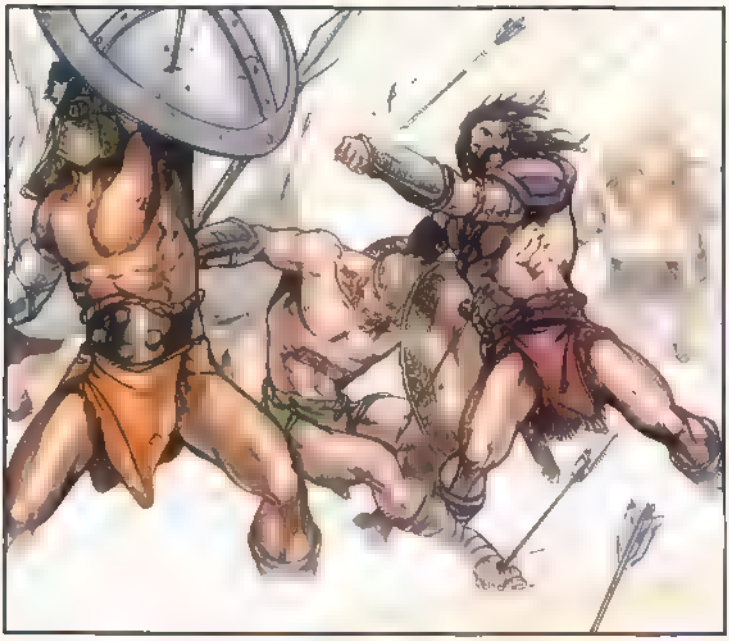
THESE GAMES WERE MARKED BY A MOST EXTRAORDINARY ARMED COMBAT ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE EVENTS. THE MOB WAS HUSHED AS THE FIGHTERS WALKED OUT UPON THE SAND. THEY WERE IN SILENT ANTICIPATION OF THEIR NEW HERO: THE GLADIATOR KNOWN AS BRADMANACUS, THE MAN KILLER, THE HAMMER OF URE. HE HAD EMERGED VICTORIOUS AGAINST IMPOSSIBLE OPPOSITION AND THE PLEBIANS LOVED HIM FOR IT.

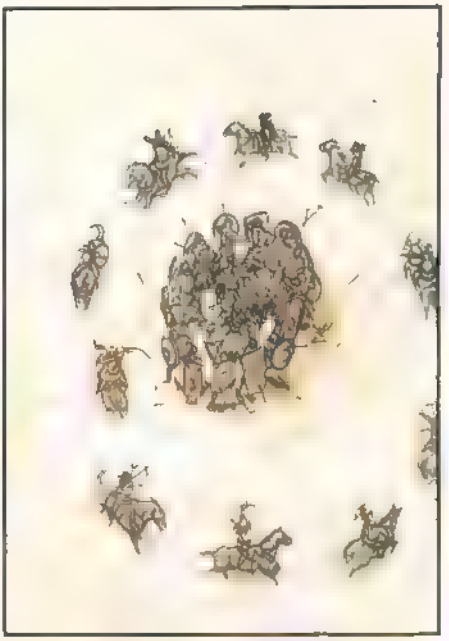
CALLED BRATH IN THE LAND OF HIS BIRTH, THE WILD BARBARIAN HAD WON THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE THEY LOVED AN UNDERDOG. HE SURPASSED EVEN THE ALEMANNI FIGHTING FURY NAMED ULE IN THEIR HEARTS.



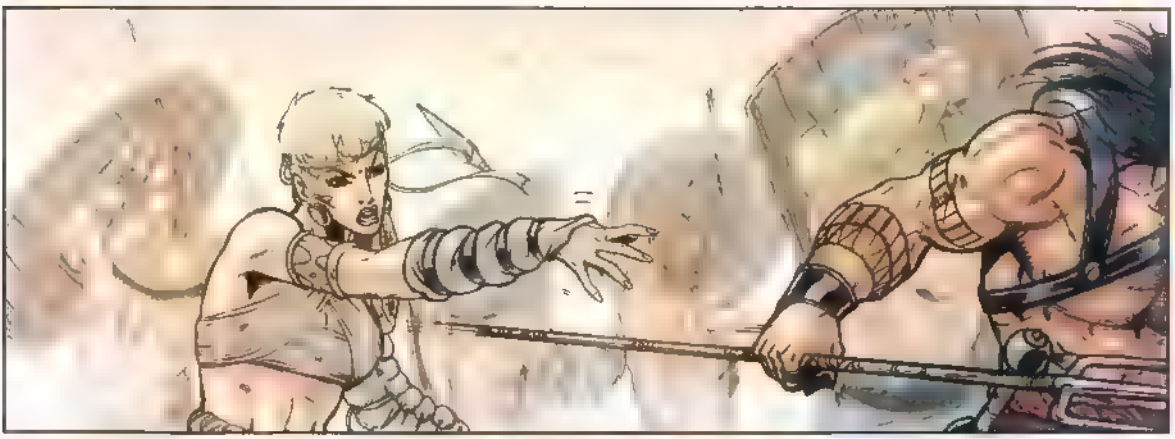
GOSSIP AND WHISPERS ABOUT THE COURT SPOKE OF A DEEP LOATHING FOR THIS POPULAR NEW FIGHTER HELD BY THE EMPEROR HIMSELF. IT WAS RUMORED THAT PRISCUS WANTED THE HAMMER OF URE TO DIE AND THE COURAGEOUS BRUTE REFUSED TO OBLIGE

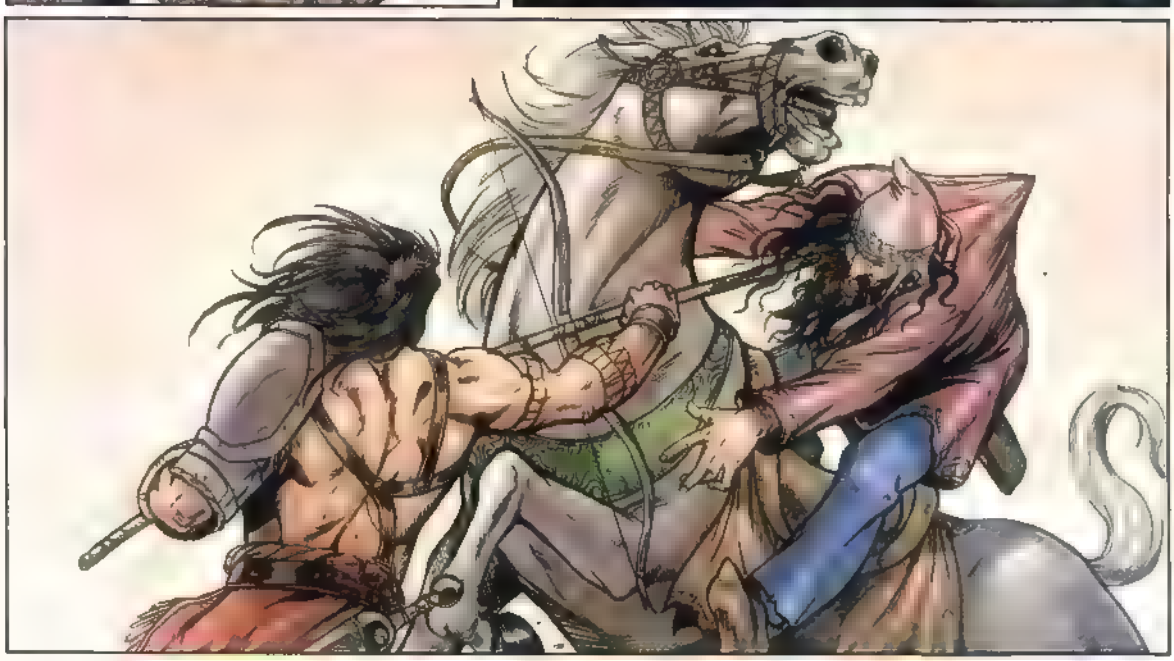
THE ODDS AGAINST BRADMANACUS WERE STACKED HIGH. HE AND HIS BROTHER COMBATANTS FIRST FACED A HORDE OF BRYTHUNIAN HORSE ARCHERS FROM THE BARREN DESERTS OF THE EMPIRE'S MOST EASTERN REACHES. AT FIRST THE GLADIATORS WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE AND MANY FELL EARLY IN THE FIGHT





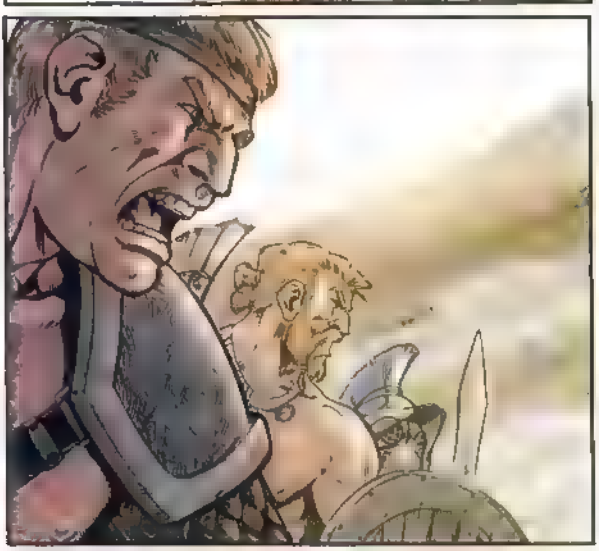
BRADMANACUS BROKE FROM THE DEFENSIVE RING OF SHIELDS TO BRING THE BATTLE TO THE MOUNTED BOWMEN. THE ROAR OF THE MOB WAS DEAFENING AS HE ALTERED THE COURSE OF THE CONFLICT WITHOUT THE AID OF HIS FELLOWS.

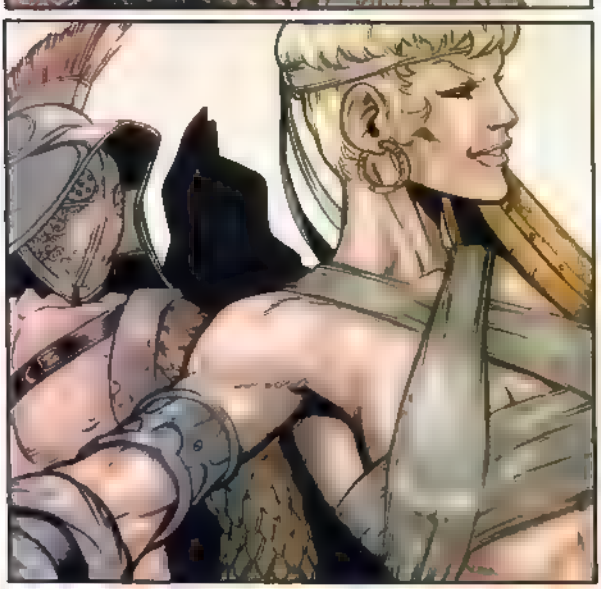




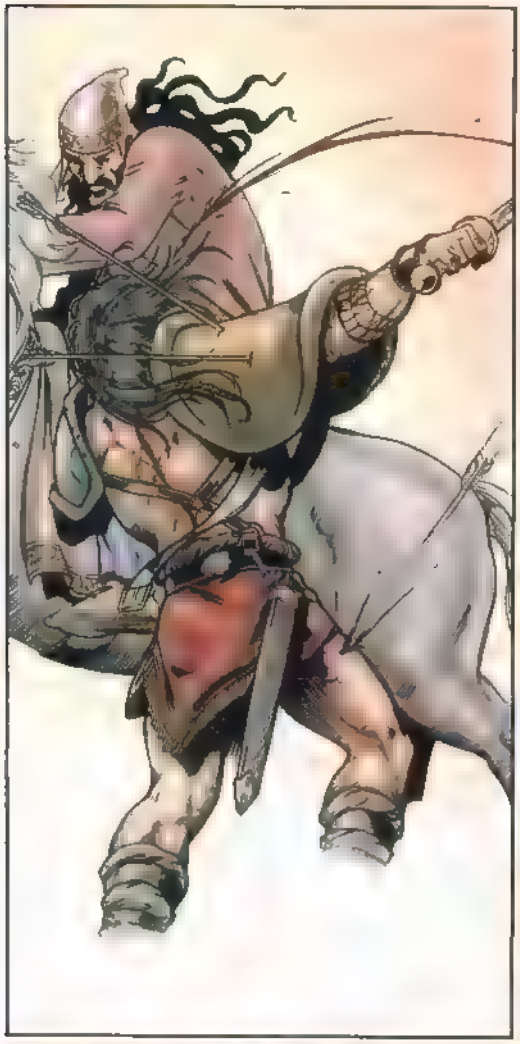
As might a hero of legend, the deadly Irisian waded among the Brythunians with muscle and steel. He was among them and dealing death. They could not bring their missiles to bear upon him.

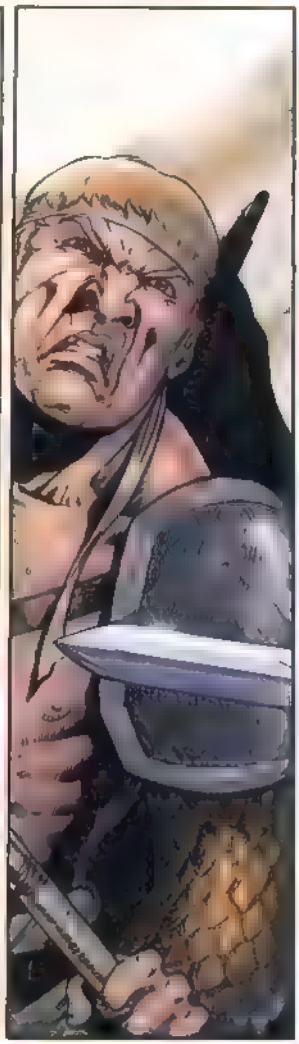
THE CHEERS OF DELIGHT FROM THE MOB TURNED TO A LOW RUMBLE AS BRADMANACUS FOUGHT ALONE WITHOUT THE HELP OF HIS BROTHERS THEY HOWLED AND SHRIEKED FOR THE GLADIATORS TO MOVE TO THE SIDE OF THEIR IDOL THE EMPEROR DID NOT VOICE HIS OPINON. HE SIMPLY WATCHED WITH KEEN INTEREST.

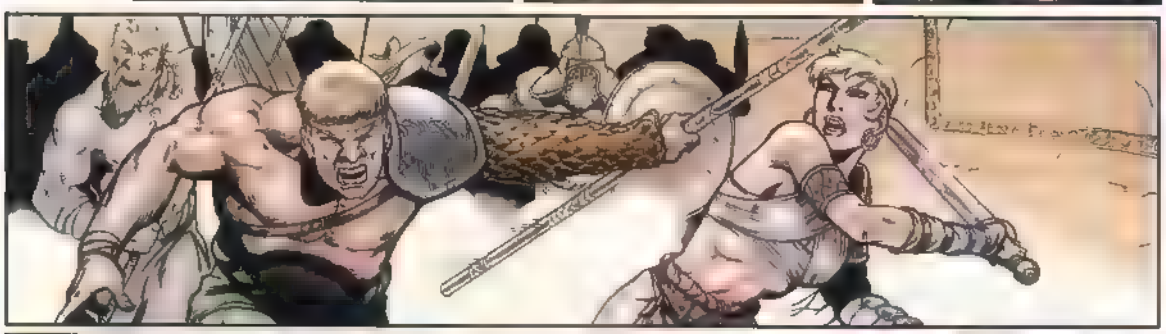




BRADMANACUS WAS WOUNDED AND WEAKENED. TEARS OF FRUSTRATION AND SCREAMS OF RAGE WERE COMMON IN THE GALLERY ABOVE THE SAND. WHETHER ACTING UPON THE ENTREATIES OF THE AUDIENCE OR BY SOME PREDETERMINED STRATEGY, THE FIGHTERS JOINED THE CONFLICT.



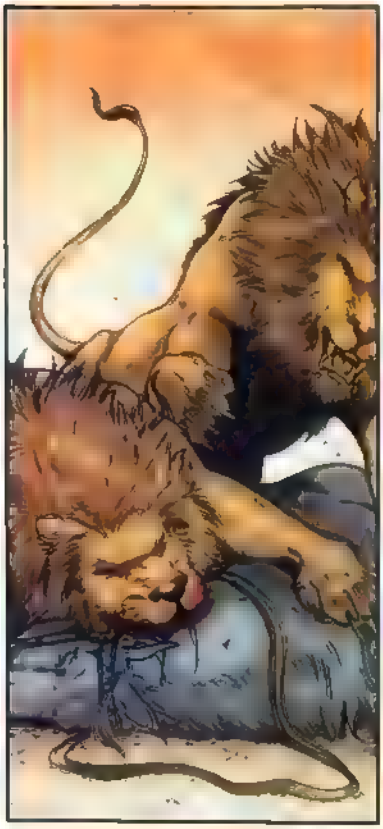


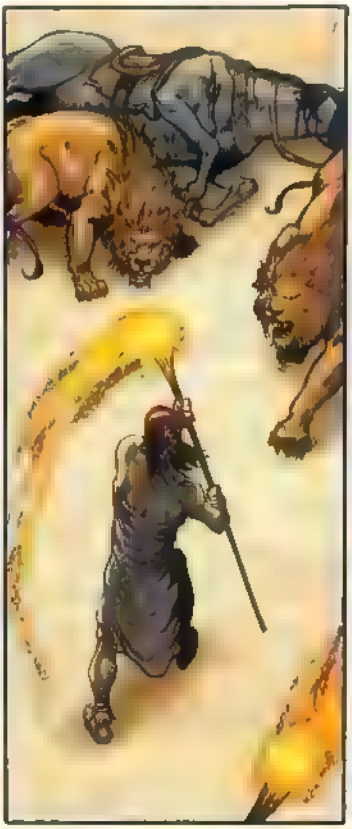


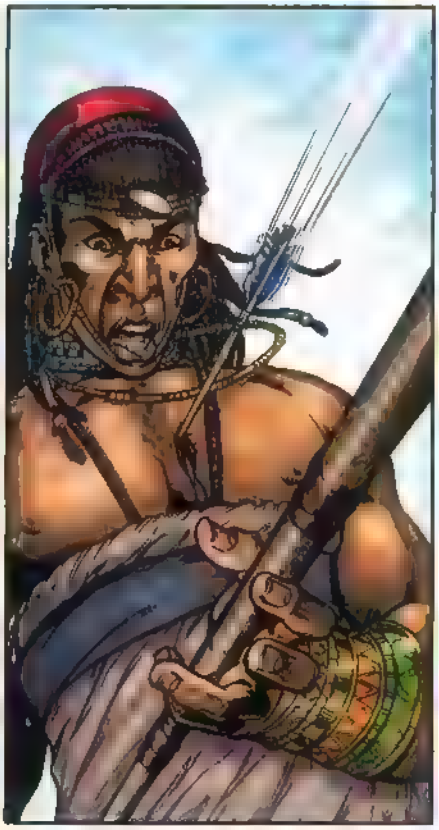
THE BRYTHUNIANS FELL BENEATH THE TRIDENTS AND BLADES OF THE FIGHTERS COME TO BRADMANACUS' SIDE. SHOULDER TO SHOULDER THEY STOOD AND ANNIHILATED THE HATED HORSEMEN. ONLY ULE REMAINED OUT OF THE BATTLE. ONLY PRISCUS SEEMED UNMOVED.

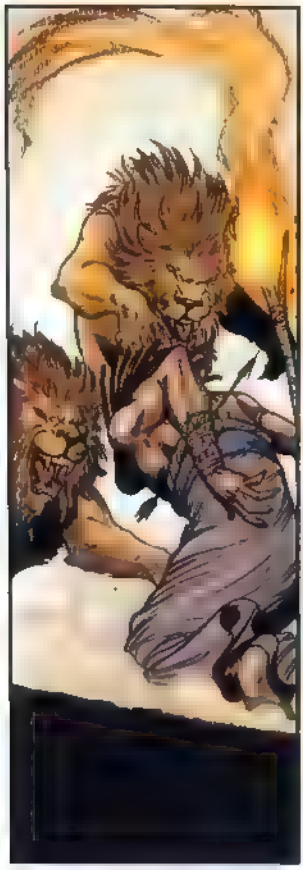
THE MAD CHEERING FROM THE STANDS HAD HARDLY DIED AND THE DEAD NOT YET DRAGGED FROM THE FIELD WHEN THE GATES OF LIFE CREAKED OPEN ONCE MORE AND THERE EMERGED A FRESH HORROR. LIONS WERE GOADED INTO THE ARENA BY DARK MEN FROM FAR BEYOND THE REACHES OF THE SOUTHERN FRONTIERS.

THE AWED HUSH OF THE MOB TURNED TO GALES OF LAUGHTER AND CHEERING AS THE HAMMER OF URE TURNED THE TABLES FOR JUST A MOMENT. THE EMPEROR WAS SEEN TO BE BITING BACK RAGE IN THE SHADE OF THE IMPERIAL AWNING.

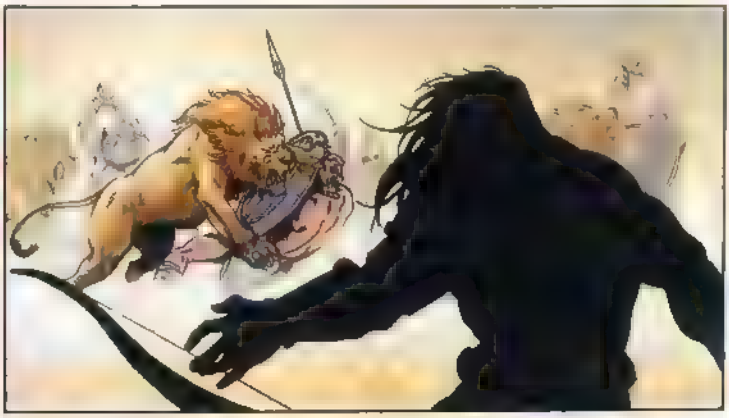


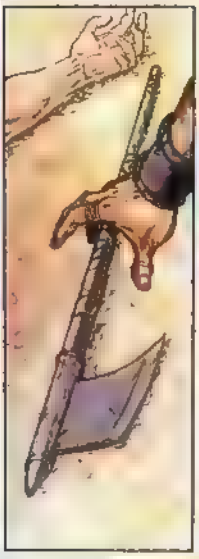


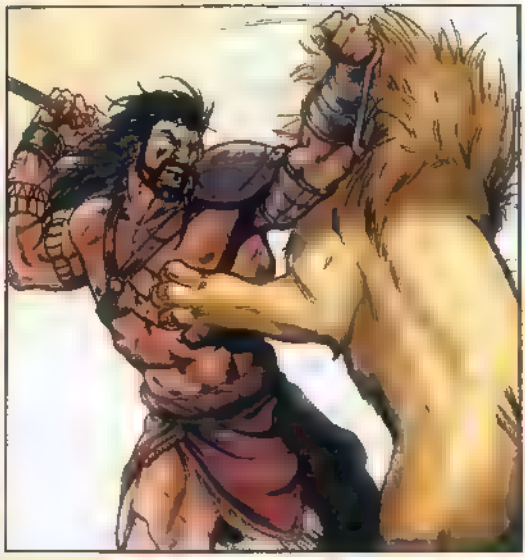


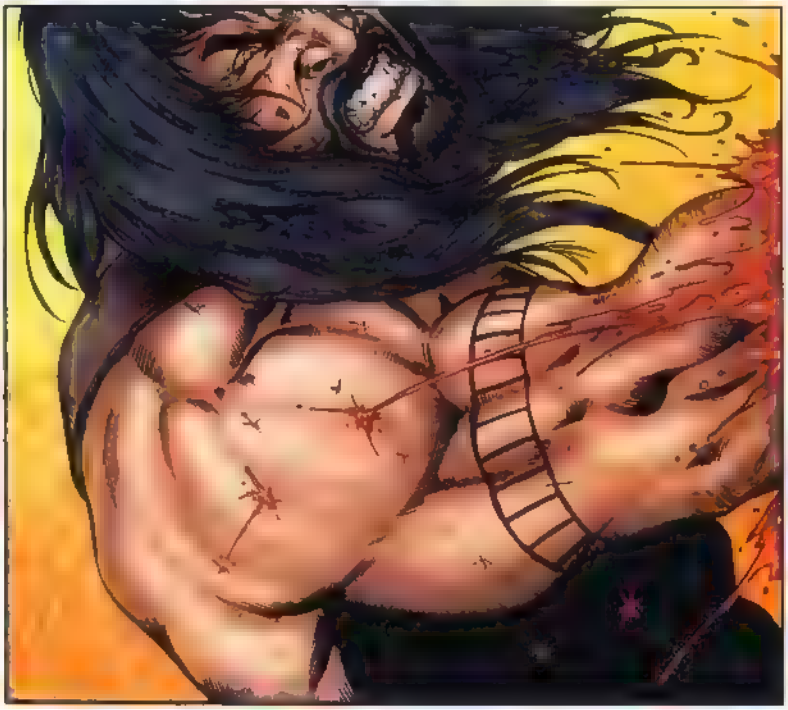


BRADMANACUS MADE ABLE USE OF A BRYTHUNIAN BOW AND SHAFTS BUT THE BEASTS CLOSED WITH THE MASSED WARRIORS ULE, ONCE THE FAVORITE OF THE MOB, STOOD ISOLATED FROM HER COMRADES. TWO OF THE LARGEST FELINES RUSHED FOR HER AS THEY MIGHT A GAZELLE CUT FROM THE HERD.

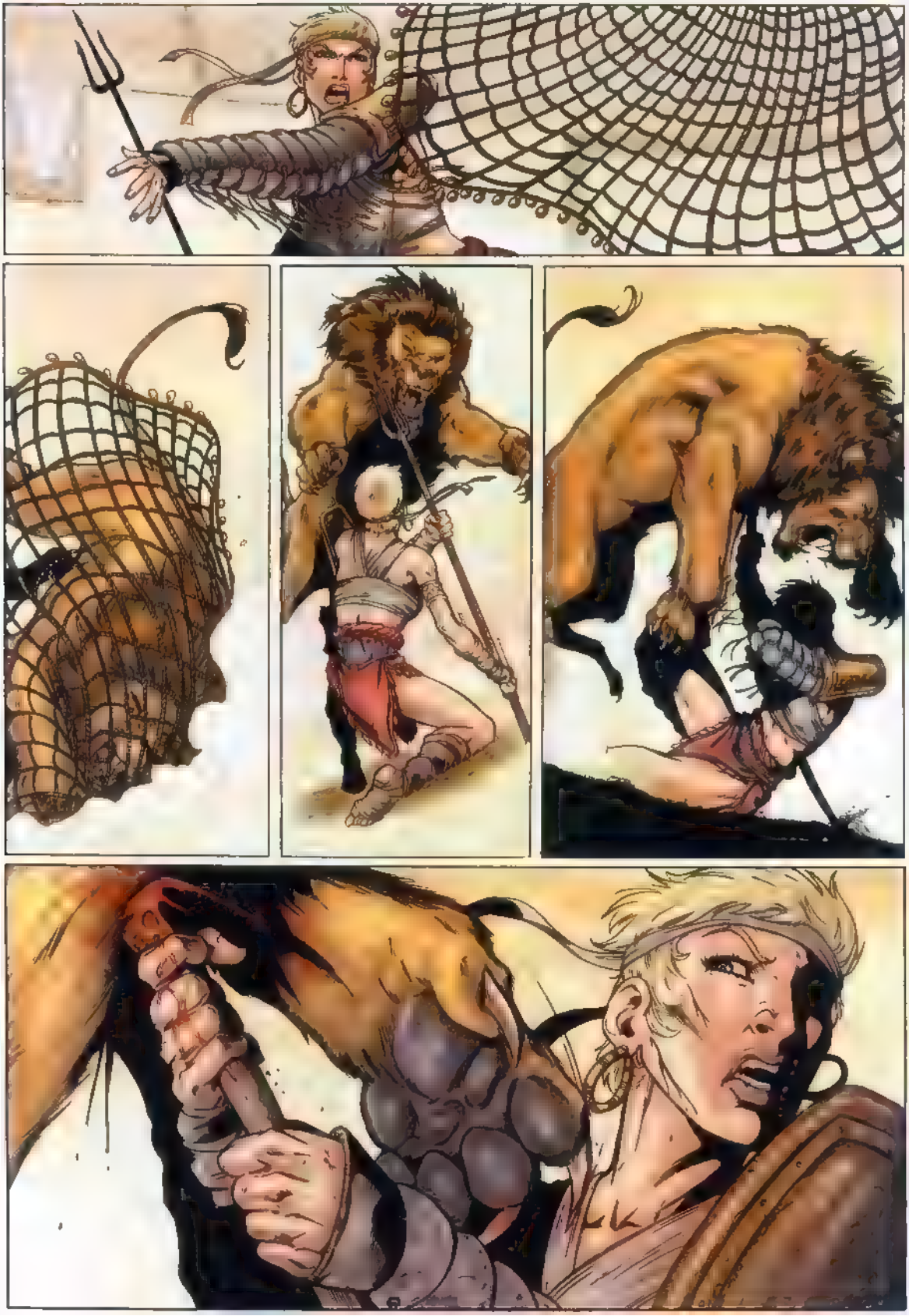




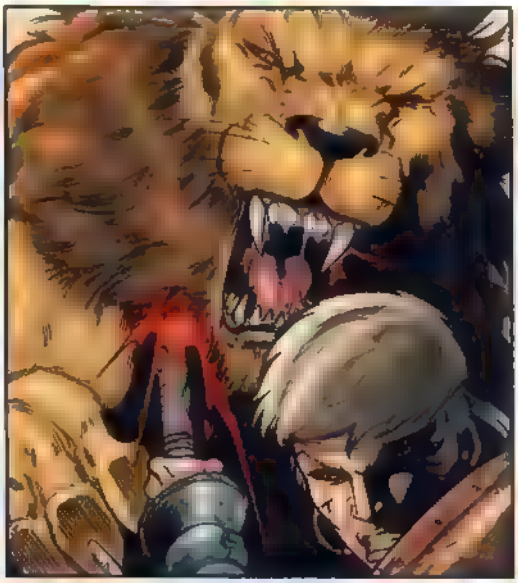


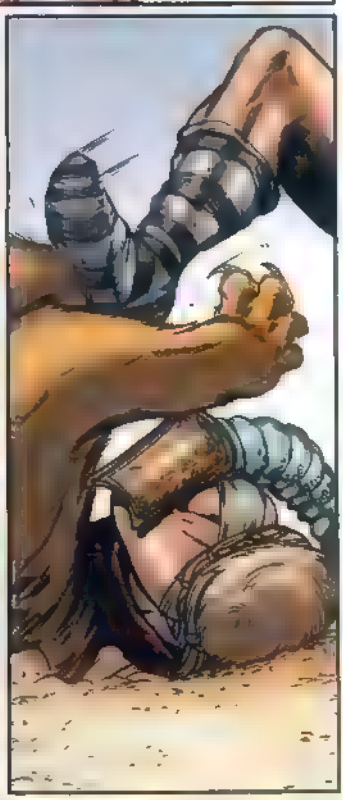


HER SKILL WITH A RETIARIUS NET REMINDED ALL OF WHY HER FACE ADORNED COINS AND HER NAME WAS KNOWN AND CELEBRATED THROUGHOUT THE CIVILIZED LANDS. A LION YET REMAINED AND SHE FACED THE GREAT ANIMAL WITH ONLY HER TRIDENT.

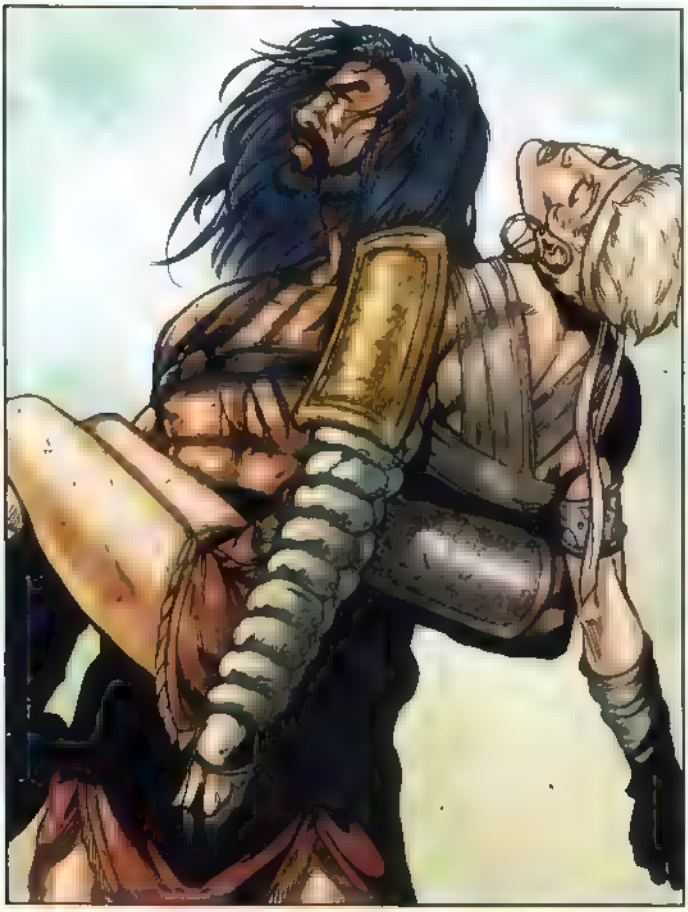


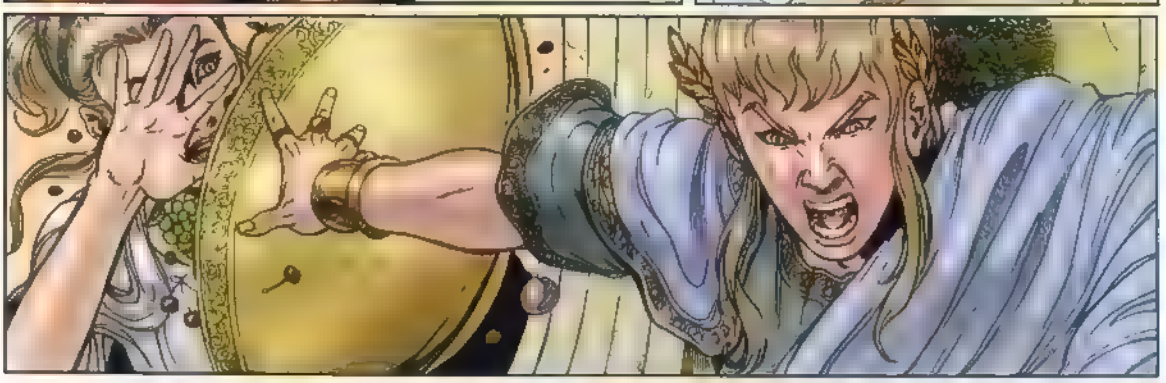
OVER THE STANDS OF THE CIRCUS SPREAD A SILENCE SO DEEP THAT THE FLAPPING OF THE PENDANTS IN THE WIND COULD BE CLEARLY HEARD ABOVE ALL ELSE. THE VALIANT FURY OF THE ALEMANNI HELD THE SNARLING BRAWN OF THE MIGHTY CAT AT BAY. IT WAS CLEAR TO ALL THAT THIS WAS A LOSING EFFORT UNTIL BRADMANACUS INTERVENED.

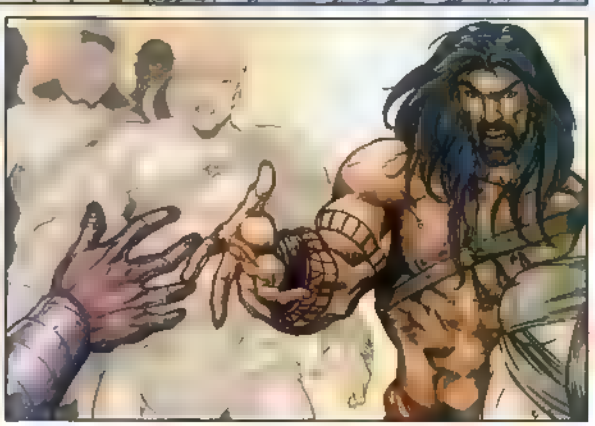




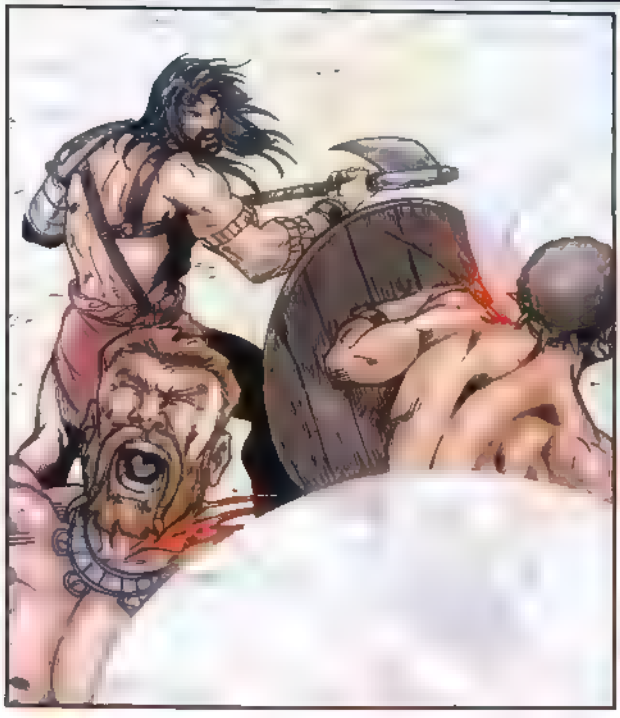
It is widely said that the roar from those attending the games that day could be heard in the port of Ostia, a full twenty leagues distant. Women fainted dead away. Men shouted until they were hoarse. Above it all, the high pitched shouts of the Emperor could be heard.

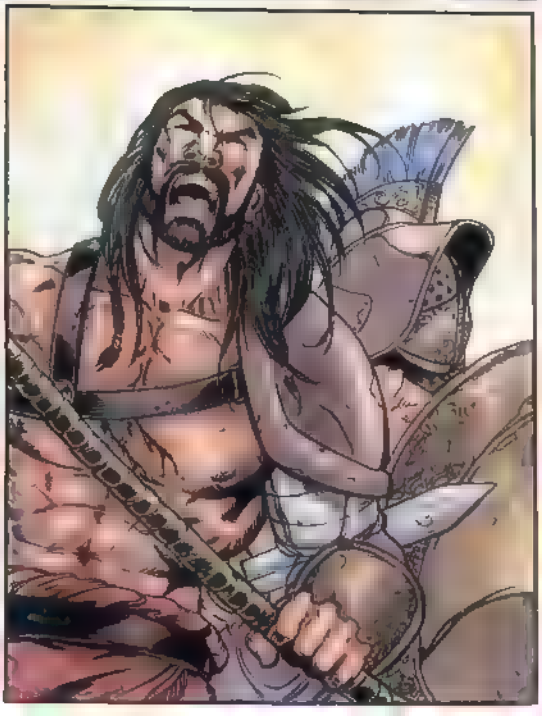




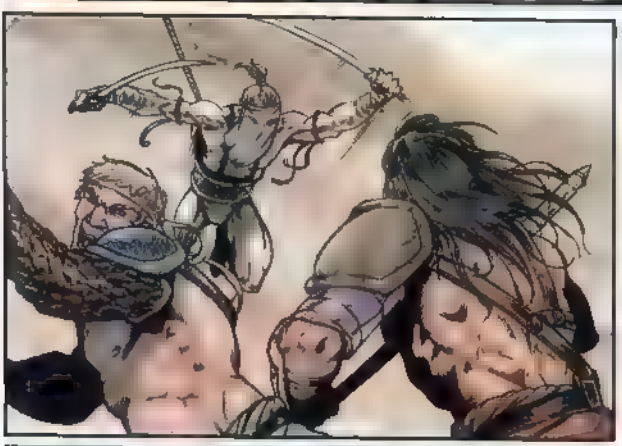


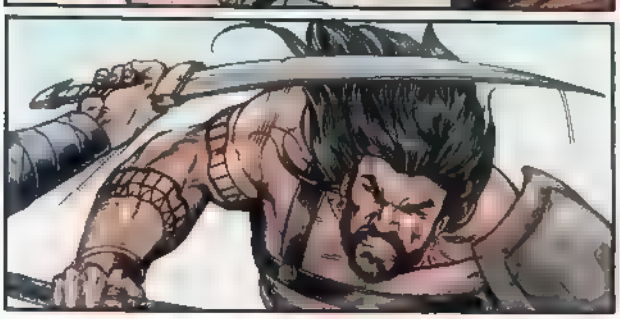
THE BATTLE WAS FAR FROM FINISHED AS A FINAL, DEADLY NEW EVENT WAS INTRODUCED. TO MEET AND EXCEED THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE MOB, THOSE WHO DESIGNED THE GAMES SEARCHED FAR AND WIDE FOR NEW AMUSEMENTS. THIS LATEST WAS TO PROVE AS SPECTACULAR AS IT WAS BLOODY.

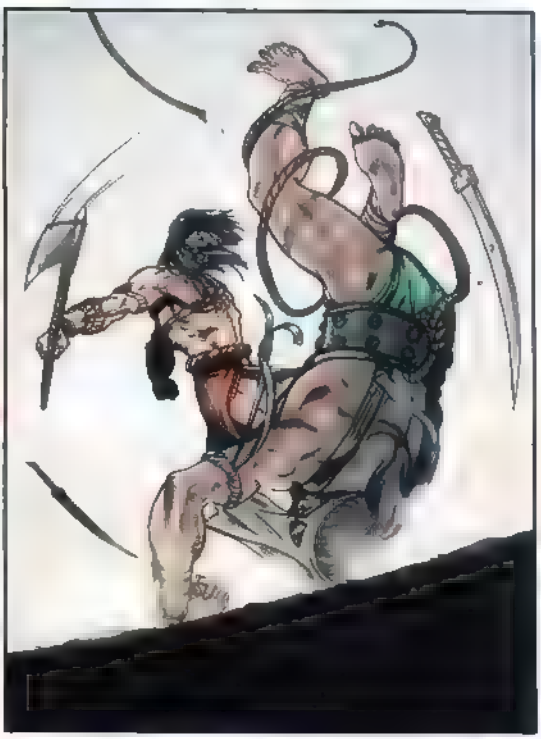




CAPTURED XENOCIAN PIRATES PROVED THEIR ENTERTAINMENT WORTH AND THRILLED THE CROWDS WITH THE SKILLS THAT MADE THEM SO FEARED UPON THE SEAS. MORE AT HOME IN THE RIGGING OF A SHIP IN STORMY SEAS THAN THEY ARE ON UNMOVING GROUND. THEIR DEADLY CURVED BLADES LOOKED TO BE THE FINISH OF THE COMPANY OF WEARY GLADIATORS.

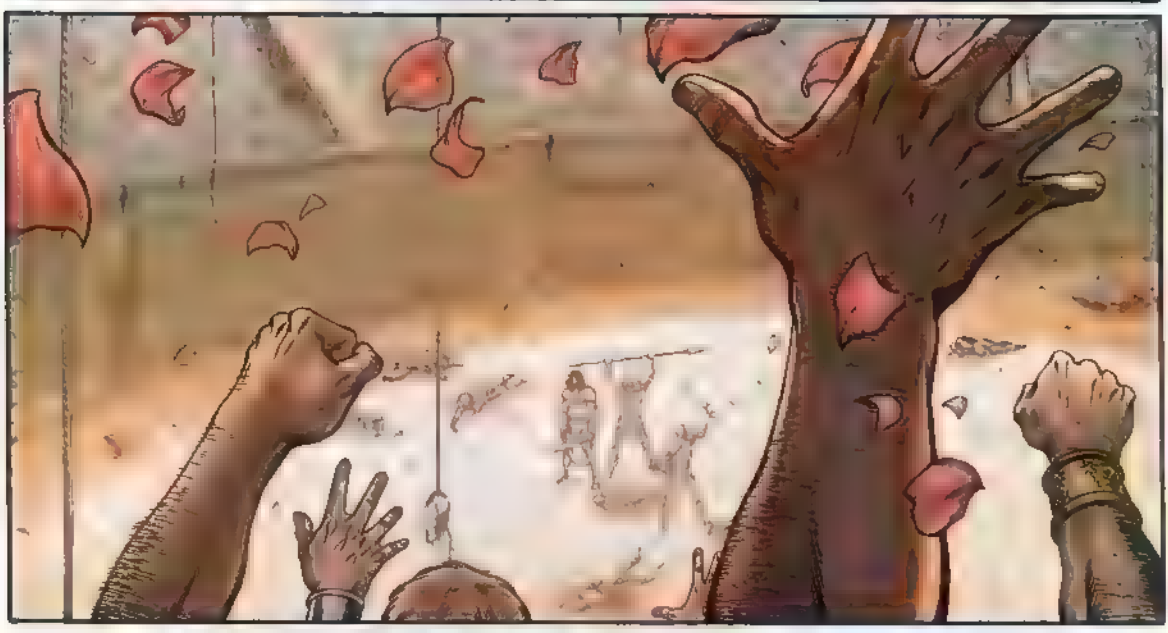


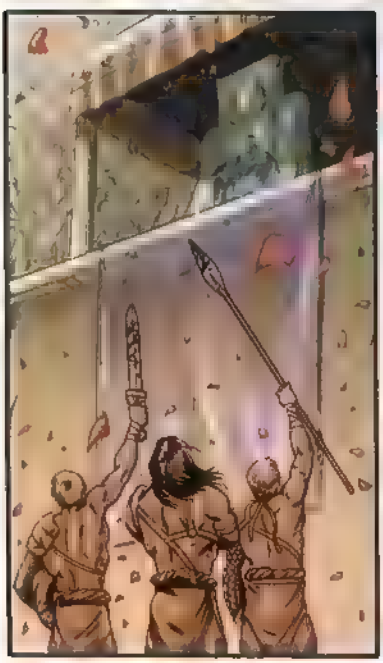




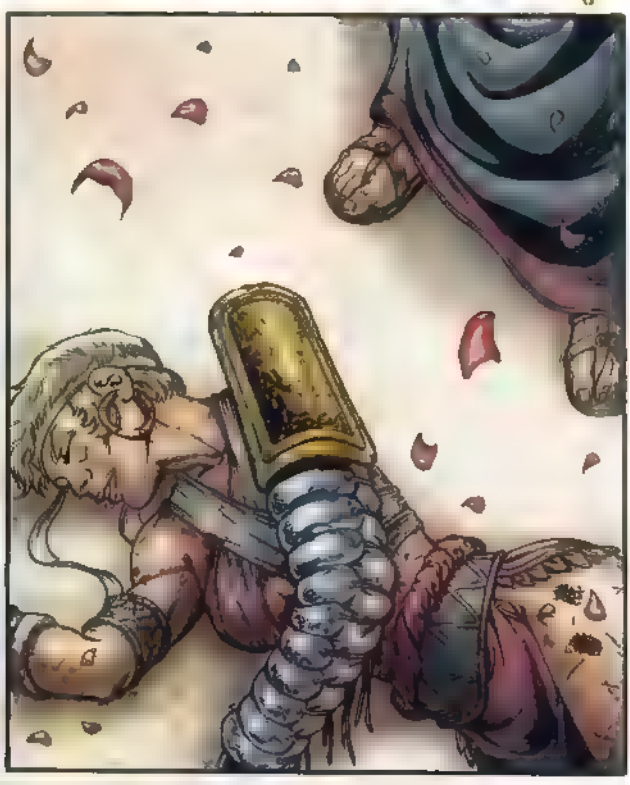
IT WAS BRADMANACUS TO THE FORE ONCE AGAIN. THE IRISIAN SHOWED THE SKILLS AT WAR THAT MADE HIM SO FORMIDABLE A FOE OF THE EMPIRE. HIS COMRADES TOOK HEED OF HIS TACTIC AND TURNED UPON THE XENOCIANS WITH GREAT ZEAL AND BLOODLUST.

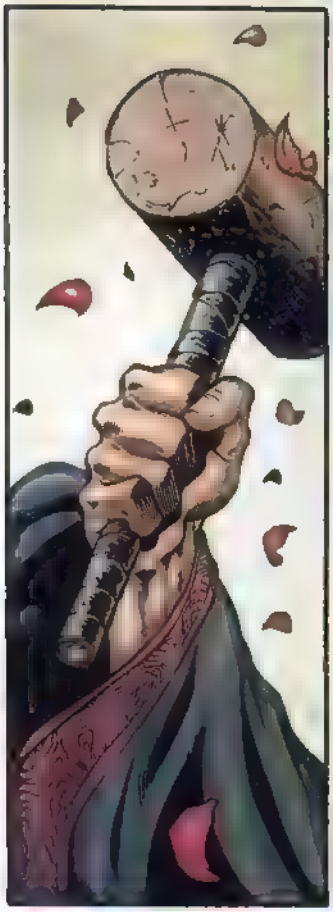
THE MOB IN THEIR SEATS WAS NEAR AS EXHAUSTED FROM CHEERING AS THE FIGHTERS ON THE SAND WERE FROM BATTLE. THE STRUGGLE WAS OVER FOR NOW. THE MASTERS OF THE GAMES HAD RUN DRY OF THREATS FOR THE BRAVE COMPANY AND SO WERE DISMISSED BY A SULLEN PRISCUS.

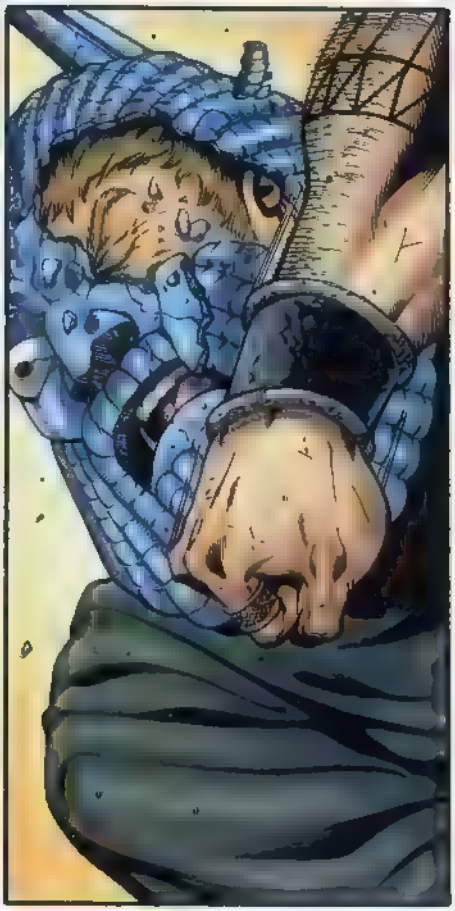




But a final entertainment remained in a show of mercy in great contrast to his savagery, the mighty Bradmanacus spared the life of Ule. Had he not already the admiration of every citizen in attendance that day, he was assured it by this act.







THUS ENDED THE EIGHTY-NINTH GAMES OF THAT YEAR. IT WAS AN EVENT SPOKEN OF BY GENERATIONS AND NEVER ECLIPSED BY ANY OTHER. THE DEAD WERE BURIED AND THE WOUNDED GIVEN CARE. AND AS THE DAY CLOSED, TWO THINGS WERE CERTAIN FOR BRADMANACUS, THE HAMMER OF URE: THE ADMIRATION OF THE EMPIRE'S CITIZENS AND THE LOATHING OF THE GOD EMPEROR PRISCUS.

KISS KISS BANG BANG PREVIEW INSIDE!

BRATH

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PREVIOUSLY IN BRATH

From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe, the world is ruled by the emperor Gaius Metallus Priscus Deius Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. Only the gods sit in judgement of his august presence.

One land and one people remained beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continued to defy the throne of the great Priscus Rex. Once led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen have been devastated on the battlefield by the Emperor's legions.

The traitorous Vinn Mac Dool has enlisted his clan as auxiliaries in the Imperial legions under General Vala. Even now they march with their new masters toward lands held by the fierce tribe known as the Hains.

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DAVE LANPHEAR
Letterer

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FROM THE CAUDEX LEGIO XI:
RENUNTIUM CXVIII.
THE ELEVENTH LEGION CROSSED THE RIVER KNOWN TO THE LOCAL TRIBES AS THE CAVULUNDI ON THEIR FIRST SORTIE AGAINST THE IRISIAN TRIBES OF THE HANAII. THIS TRIBE IS ANOTHER OF THE UNAFFILIATED CLANS AND CALLED, AMONG THE URELANDERS, THE HAIN

VELES OF THE FOURTH MANIPULUS OF THE FIRST COHORT OF THE XITH ENCOUNTERED WARRIORS OF THE HAIN LYING IN WAIT FOR THEM IN THE FORESTS SOUTH OF THE LANDS OF THE HANAII. THE FOURTH OF THE FIRST WAS MARCHING IN ADVANCE OF THE MAIN FORCE TO TEST ENEMY STRENGTH

SLAUGHTERED TO A *MAN.*

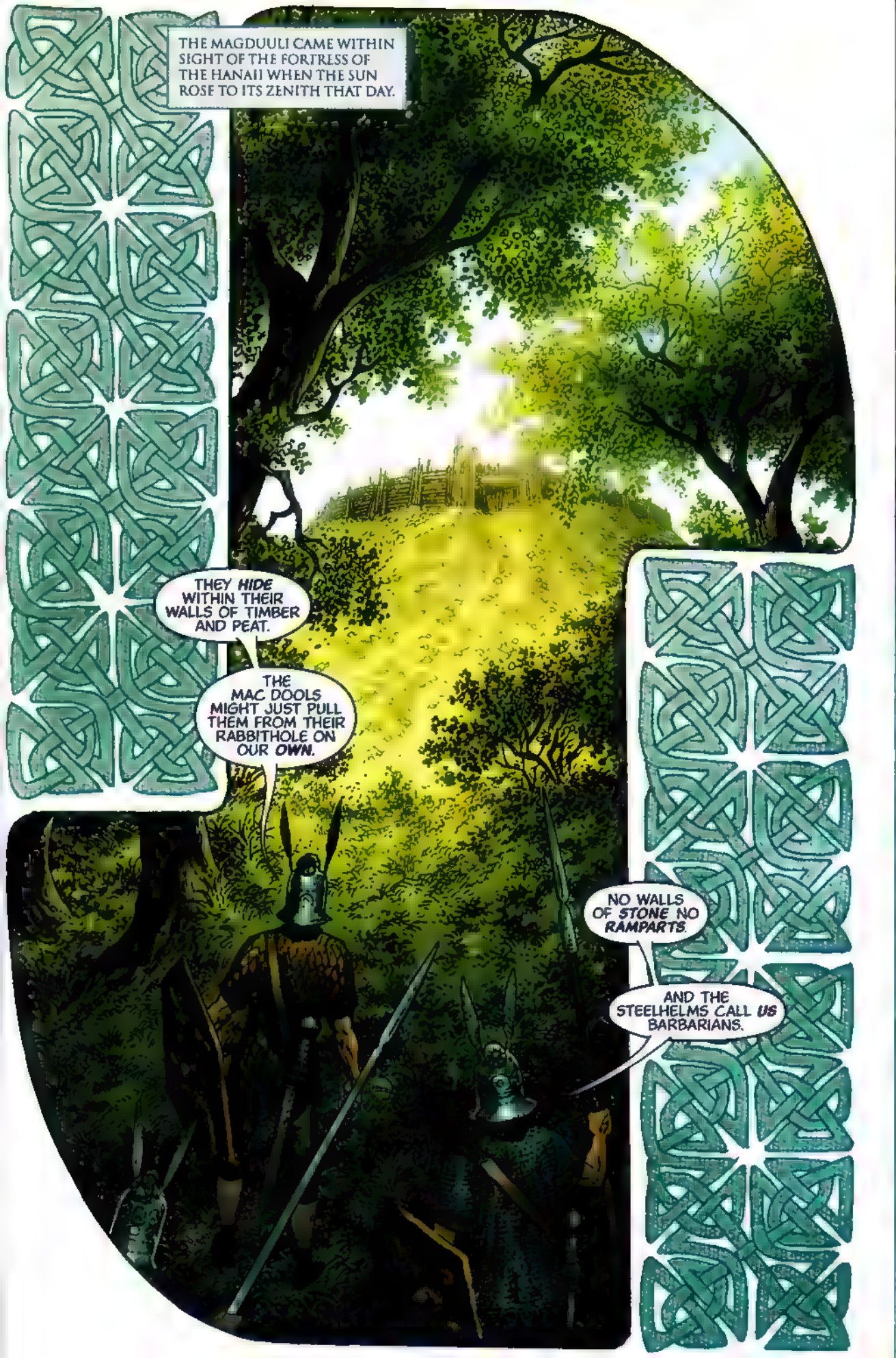
BEASTS AND *COWARDS*, THAT IS WHAT WE *FACE* IN THIS BEDEVILED LAND.

THEY STRIKE FROM HIDING AND FLEE FROM A TRUE FIGHT.

MARCHING WITH THE XITH WAS THE COHORS ALARIA MAGDUULI AN AUXILIARY COHORT OF LOCAL BARBARIANS RECRUITED AS LIGHT INFANTRY
AYE, TRIBUNE DRUSUS. THE HAIN ARE A VICIOUS LOT.
NO DECENT CLAN WILL HAVE OUGHT TO DO WITH 'EM.
YOU'VE DONE WELL BY YOUR PEOPLE, VINN MAC DOOL.
YOU WILL SEE THE BENEFIT OF BEING A MEMBER OF THE EMPIRE, I PROMISE.
YOU WILL HAVE NO CAUSE FOR REGRET EITHER, TRIBUNE.
THE MAC DOOLS ARE HONORED TO BE PLACED AFORE THE REST OF YOUR ARMY WHERE WE WILL PROVE OUR COURAGE.
QUITE.
AS YOUR COMMANDER, I FIND THAT MOST REASSURING. FIGHT WELL.

IGNORANT SAVAGES TO THE LAST MAN.
BUT WE OWE THEM FOR THEIR BETRAYAL OF THE MAGGARIS.
WE COULD HAVE DEFEATED BRADMANACUS WITHOUT THE HELP OF THOSE DOGS, DRUSUS.
HUH. VINN BELIEVES THAT HE MARCHES BEFORE OUR HOME LEGIONS BECAUSE OF HIS COURAGE.
NOW~
~LET'S SEE WHAT THESE HAINS HAVE PREPARED FOR US.
RATHER, HE TAKES THE LEAD BECAUSE A MAN WHO WOULD TURN ON HIS OWN CANNOT BE RELIED UPON.
I WANT HIM IN FRONT OF OUR SPEARPOINTS.

THE XITH MARCHED NORTHWARD WITH THE MAGDUULI IN THE FORE IN THE LATE MORNING OF THE DAY FOLLOWING THE RIVER CROSSING
FATHER, THAT OUTLANDER SPOKE TO YOU AS ONE WOULD A DOG.
LET ME SLIT HIS THROAT AS HE SLEEPS.
UNNH
FOOL!
I HAVE MADE MY ALLEGIANCE WITH THE STEELHELMS, ARIN.
AS MY SON, YOU WILL HONOR IT
BE THAT DUN HAIN, MY CHIEF?
AYE, CORUM. IT LOOKS TO BE WE HAVE FOUND THE HOME OF THE HAIN.
NOT MUCH TO GAZE UPON, EH, LADS?


THE MAGDUULI CAME WITHIN SIGHT OF THE FORTRESS OF THE HANAII WHEN THE SUN ROSE TO ITS ZENITH THAT DAY.
THEY *HIDE* WITHIN THEIR WALLS OF TIMBER AND PEAT.
THE MAC DOOLS MIGHT JUST PULL THEM FROM THEIR RABBITHOLE ON OUR *OWN*.
NO WALLS OF *STONE* NO *RAMPARTS*.
AND THE STEELHELMS CALL *US* BARBARIANS.

THIS LAND HAS BEEN FRESHLY CLEARED OF TREES.
TO BUILD THEIR FORTIFICATIONS, DRUSUS.
PERHAPS.
NOT TYPICAL OF THESE ANIMALS TO ALLOW THE FIGHT TO COME THIS CLOSE TO THEIR HOVELS.
YOU GIVE THEM TOO MUCH CREDIT AS TACTICIANS.
BY BELLICUS!
IT'S A RUSE!
MARWOL'TH!
HUNH!

D'YOU SEE, ARIN? THAT STRUTTIN' OUTLANDER HAS STEPPED IN IT, EH?
AYE, FATHER.
THAT UPSTART DRUSUS HAS LED OUR CAVALRY INTO A VISE.
ADIUTOR! GET THOSE FOREIGN DOGS ON THE MARCH TO HIS AID!
AS YOU COMMAND, GENERAL VALA!
AVE! ORDERS FROM THE GENERAL!
THE MAC DOOLS KNOW HOW TO FIGHT, WHELP!
YOU ARE TO ADVANCE IN ORDER TOWARD THE FORTIFICATIONS.
YOU OUTLANDERS TRY TO KEEP UP, EH? WE'LL SAVE YOU A FEW HAINS TO KILL.

MY COUSINS! IT IS TIME TO SHOW THESE LAZY SWINE HOW A MACDOOL GOES TO WAR!

THE ALARIA MAGDUULI MARCHED IN LOOSE ORDER UP THE HILLSIDE TOWARD THE ENEMY'S STRONGHOLD AND THE NARROW TRENCHES DUG BY THE HANAII BELOW THE CREST OF THE HILL. THEY WERE FOLLOWED BY HEAVY INFANTRY OF THE XITH LEGION IN TWO COHORTS IN CLOSE FORMATION WITH ARCHERS BEHIND

"I DON'T LIKE IT."

GENERAL?

THE TRENCHES ARE DUG FOR CONCEALMENT WITH NO EARTHWORKS.

AND WHAT ARE THOSE BARBARIANS DOING JUST OUTSIDE THE WALLS?

"MERCY OF MISTOS~"

BUCINATOR! SOUND THE HALT!

STAND YOUR GROUND!

WHAT IS THAT *RACKET* THE STEELHELMS ARE ABOUT, COUSIN?

A *WARNING*, CORUM.

"THE RABBITHOLE HAS TURNED INTO THE *WOLF'S LAIR*.

"IT IS NOT *DUN HAIN* WE HAVE FOUND.

"IT IS *DEATH*."

STAND! STAND WHERE YOU ARE!

MAC DOOLS DO NOT SHOW THEIR BACKS!

THE TRAP IS SPRUNG.

AND WE WERE LED TO IT LIKE SHEEP

"NOW I UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF THE TRENCHES.

"AN EFFECTIVE STRATAGEM. THOUGH IT WILL ONLY WORK THIS ONCE.

"AND, BY GOOD FORTUNE, ONLY BARBARIAN BLOOD IS SPILT."

MARWOL'TH AT Y'M'CHYN!
GUNH!
STAND AND LOCK SHIELDS!
STAY AT MY SIDE, COUSINS!
IMPERIAL GOLD IN THEIR PURSE, BUT NO STEEL IN THEIR SPINE!
CLOSE RANKS! NOT ONE OF THOSE CRAVEN CURS FINDS SHELTER BEHIND OUR SHIELDS!

ACIES TRIPLEX!
SPEARS FORWARD! SHIELDS BRACED!
UH!
GAAAH!
DOGS!
THEY'LL STAND AND FIGHT OR DIE ON OUR BLADES!
TO ME, MAC DOOLS!
TO YOUR CHIEFTAIN!

THE MAGDUULI RECOVERED FROM THEIR ROUT AND FORMED A DEFENSIVE POSITION BEFORE THE RANKS OF THE XITH. THIS SALIENT HELD AGAINST THE MASS ATTACK OF THE HANAII THROUGH THE AFTERNOON.

D'ANC!

D'ANC!

THE HANAII *RETREAT.*

ORDER THE ELEVENTH TO ADVANCE AT DOUBLE PACE.

"IS THIS WHAT I CAN *EXPECT* FROM YOUR CLAN, VINN MAC DOOL?"

DO YOU KNOW THE MEANING OF THE TERM *DECIMATION?*

IT IS AN OUTLANDER WORD, NO?
IT IS THE PUNISHMENT FOR A COHORT THAT SHOWS FEAR IN BATTLE.
THE MEN OF YOUR CLAN WILL STAND IN RANKS AND BE COUNTED OFF BY TENS.
AND EACH TENTH MAN WILL BE EXECUTED FOR THE COWARDICE OF HIS FELLOWS.
AND THERE WILL BE NO PROTEST, NO RETRIBUTION, OR I WILL ANNIHILATE YOUR ENTIRE TRIBE.
MY MEN WILL TAKE THEIR PUNISHMENT WITHOUT COMPLAINT.
VERY GOOD, MAC DOOL.
WE'LL CIVILIZE YOU LOT YET.

THIS IS MORE THAN A LESSON IN DISCIPLINE, VINN.
SEVEN--
--EIGHT--
--NINE--
--TEN.
THERE ARE BENEFITS TO EMPIRE.
SIX-- SEVEN-- EIGHT--
--NINE --TEN.
BUT THERE IS ALSO A COST
THREE-- FOUR-- FIVE--
--SIX-- SEVEN-- EIGHT-- NINE--
--TEN.
ARIN--
THE PRICE OF EMPIRE.
ONE-- TWO-- THREE--
--FOUR-- FIVE-- SIX--

THE FOLLOWING DAY THE XITH BROKE CAMP TO CONTINUE THEIR MARCH DEEPER INTO TERRA HANAII. CASUALTIES WERE HIGHEST AMONG THE COHORTS ALARIA MAGDUULI
DISCIPLINARY ACTION WAS TAKEN AGAINST THE LEGIO ALARIA BY MEANS OF DECIMATION THE MAGDUULI WERE PLACED TO MARCH BETWEEN THE MAIN COHORTS OF THE XITH
THE WARRIORS OF THE HAIN MOVED WEST AND DEEPER INTO THEIR OWN LANDS THEY DISPERSED TO THEIR VILLAGES AND FORESTS. MANY TAKING PRISONERS AS SLAVES.
THE NUMBER AND NAMES OF THESE PRISONERS ARE NOT KNOWN AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING

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PREVIOUSLY IN BRATH

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One land and one people remained beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continued to defy the throne of the great Priscus Rex. Once led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen have been devastated on the battlefield by the Emperor's legions.

Now forced to battle in the gladiatorial arena, the Hammer of Ure has won the hearts of the Emperor's people. But as the games march on towards their bloody finale, who will be the last man standing?

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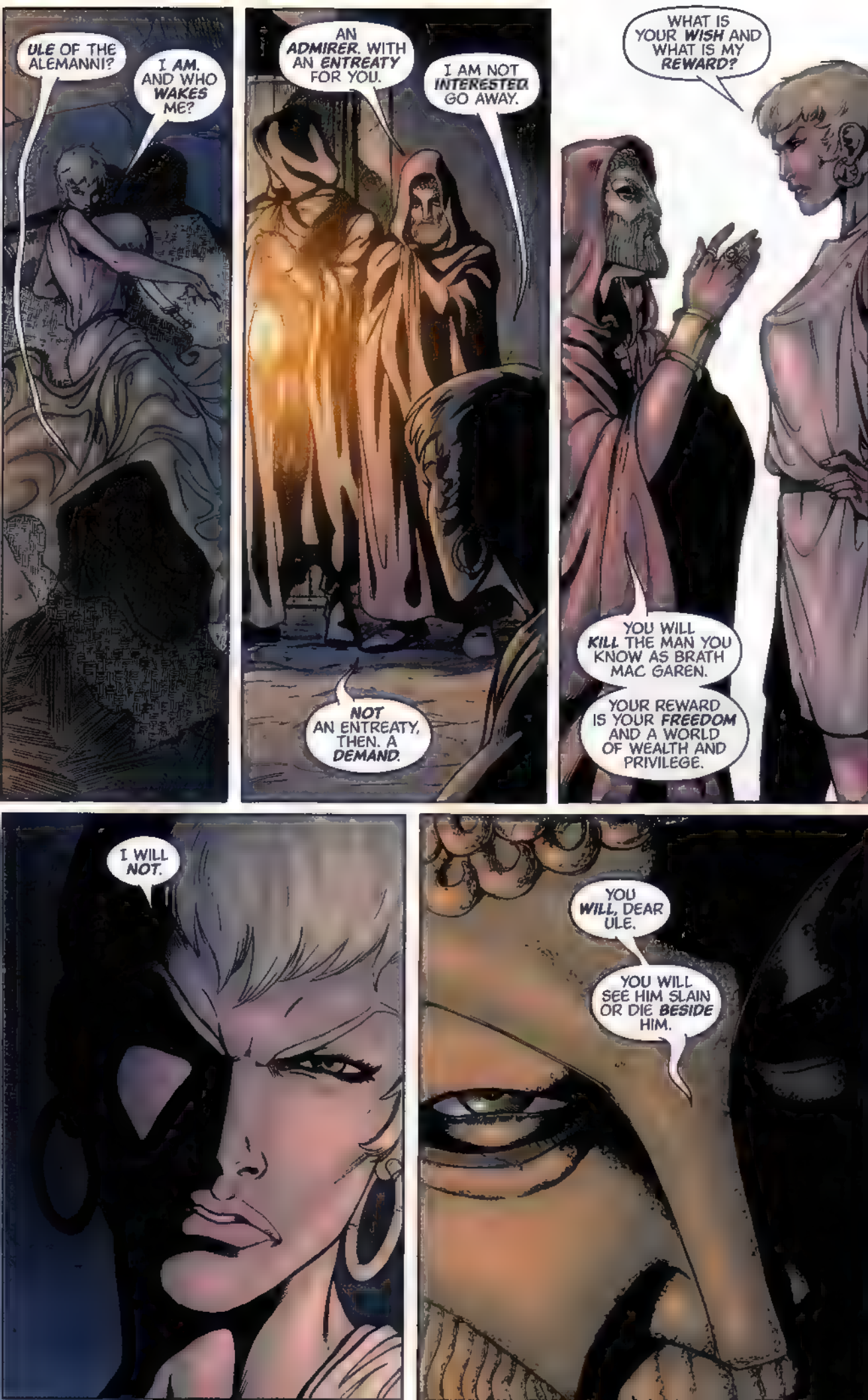
OPEN THIS GATE. WE DEMAND ENTRY!
WHO DEMANDS ENTRY?
YOUR DIVINE LEADER.
THE SCHOOL IS CLOSED, WHOEVER YOU ARE
NOT TO ME. ALL UNDER THE HEAVENS ARE OPEN TO ME
WHO ARE YOU AGAIN?
A THOUSAND APOLOGIES, YOUR DIVINITY.
THEY MAY NOT BE ENOUGH.
YOUR GOD AND EMPEROR AND SOUL OF THE EMPIRE!
PRISCUS DEUS REX!
OH


ULE OF THE ALEMANNI?
I AM. AND WHO WAKES ME?
AN ADMIRER. WITH AN ENTREATY FOR YOU.
I AM NOT INTERESTED. GO AWAY.
NOT AN ENTREATY, THEN. A DEMAND.
WHAT IS YOUR WISH AND WHAT IS MY REWARD?
YOU WILL KILL THE MAN YOU KNOW AS BRATH MAC GAREN.
YOUR REWARD IS YOUR FREEDOM AND A WORLD OF WEALTH AND PRIVILEGE.
I WILL NOT.
YOU WILL, DEAR ULE.
YOU WILL SEE HIM SLAIN OR DIE BESIDE HIM.

"AND THAT WOULD CAUSE ME MANY *REGRETS*, DARLING ULE."

TANI?

BRYLLIN?

IS *THIS* WHERE I FIND THEM, STAG?

IS THIS DARK PLACE WHERE I FIND MY *WOMAN* AND MY *SON?*

SHOW THEM TO ME

I WANT TO *KNOW*, STAG--

~DO THEY LIVE~?
~TANI~
YOUR WOMAN, BRATH MAC GAREN.
YOU FACE DEATH ANEW EACH DAY, AND STILL IT IS FOR YOUR WOMAN YOU FEAR.
"FOR ALL THAT YOU KNOW SHE LIES DEAD MANY LEAGUES FROM HERE."
HERE.
HERE? WHAT'S HERE, TANI?
I'M NOT SURE, DER.

A HILL TEMPLE OF THE *CRUITHI*. A MAD WITCH LIKE C'INNTRA MIGHT HAVE *TRADE* WITH THEM~
~MIGHT HAVE BROUGHT MY *SON* HERE
FRESH *SMOKE* ARISING
AYE, BUCKIE. THEM CRUITHI ARE *MAD*~THEY WORSHIP THE MOON GODDESS.
THE PONIES DON'T *LIKE* THIS PLACE
IT'S THE *SMOKE*
MORE THAN SMOKE

NO ONE *HERE*. I THOUGHT PERHAPS C'INNTRA WOULD BE *ABOUT*.
THAT *STINK*. SOMETHING *BITTER* IN THE WIND.
WHO'S TO *KNOW* WHAT THOSE WILDMEN COOKED HERE?
THAT'S *NOT* A COOKFIRE IT'S A *SACRIFICIAL* PYRE.
WHO HAVE THOSE BLOODY-MINDED--
GODS OF THE STARS--
NO--
TANI--
WHAT *IS* IT?
YOU LADS LOOK AS THOUGH--
BRYLLIN.

LITTLE BRYLLIN
COUSIN, IF THERE IS ANYTHING WE CAN DO.
YES.
THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO.
YOU AND BUCKIE WILL RIDE WITH ME AND HUNT DOWN THE WITCH C'INNTRA
WE WILL FIND HER AND KILL HER~

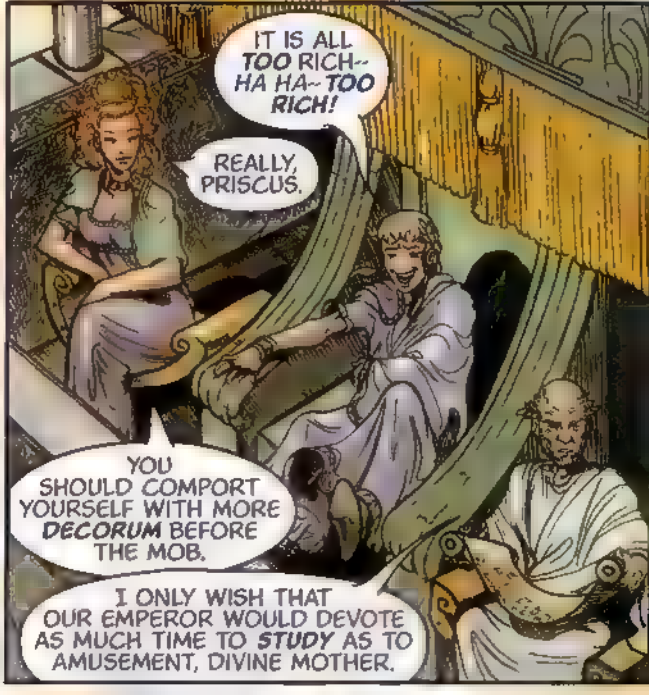
"~THOUGH IT TAKE UNTIL THE *END* OF DAYS.

"THE WITCH AND ANY WHO *AIDED* HER HAVE ENTERED THE LAND OF THE *DEAD*.

"ALL THAT IS LEFT IS THE *KILLING*."

GAAAAH!

HA HA HA HA HA HA!
THE LITTLE MAN--=SNORT=--MONKEYS--HEE!


IT IS ALL *TOO* RICH--HA HA--*TOO RICH!*
REALLY, PRISCUS.
YOU SHOULD COMPORT YOURSELF WITH MORE *DECORUM* BEFORE THE MOB.
I ONLY WISH THAT OUR EMPEROR WOULD DEVOTE AS MUCH TIME TO *STUDY* AS TO AMUSEMENT, DIVINE MOTHER.

WORDS.
WORDS THAT WILL COME *BACK* TO HAUNT YOU, LEARNED TACITUS.

=HUNH!=
=HUHH!=
=HUNH!=

HUNH!

PRAY TO YOUR GODS AND TIGHTEN YOUR ARMOR, MY SONS.
THE SIDESHOWS AND COMEDIES ARE PLAYED OUT. NOW THE REAL WORK BEGINS.
BLOODY WORK.
BRATH, I WOULD SPEAK WITH YOU.
I HAVE TOLD YOU, ULE--
I KNOW. YOU HAVE A WOMAN.
AND IF YOU WISH TO SEE HER AGAIN, YOU WILL ACCEPT MY GIFT.

"OR YOU MAY DIE ON THE SAND WITH THE JEERS OF YOUR ENEMIES RINGING IN YOUR EARS."
FEH. THE STENCH OF THOSE GREAT BEASTS. MORE ROSEWATER, MIRA.
AS YOU WISH, MISTRESS.
I'M NOT CERTAIN WHICH IS WORSE--THE SMELL AND THE FLIES--
--OR YOUR EAGERNESS FOR THIS VULGAR DISPLAY.
IT IS LIFE, MOTHER-- RAW AND POWERFUL.
NOW WE'LL SEE SOMETHING SPECIAL-- SOMETHING I'VE ARRANGED PRIVATELY.
THE DRAMATIC END TO AN EPIC TALE--

CITIZENS!
MEN AND WOMEN OF THE EMPIRE!
YOUR DIVINE AND NOBLE EMPEROR HAS REQUESTED A COMBAT~
--A COMBAT TO THE DEATH! A COMBAT WITH BUT ONE SURVIVOR!
A BATTLE THAT WILL ONLY BE FINISHED WHEN ONE GLADIATOR REMAINS STANDING!
WHAT'S THIS NONSENSE?
WE WERE NOT TOLD OF THIS!
THIS IS A BETRAYAL!
TO THE DEATH!

SO, DEXTUS, WILL YOU MEWL LIKE A CHILD--
--OR FIGHT!
UNNH!
YOU BARBARIAN-- HARPY!
WHAT A JEST ON YOUR MANHOOD--
--SHOULD A WOMAN BE THE LAST TO STAND?
AGHK!
IT IS TO BE COMBAT, TABAS-- UH-- NOT MURDER.
SOMETHING YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE!

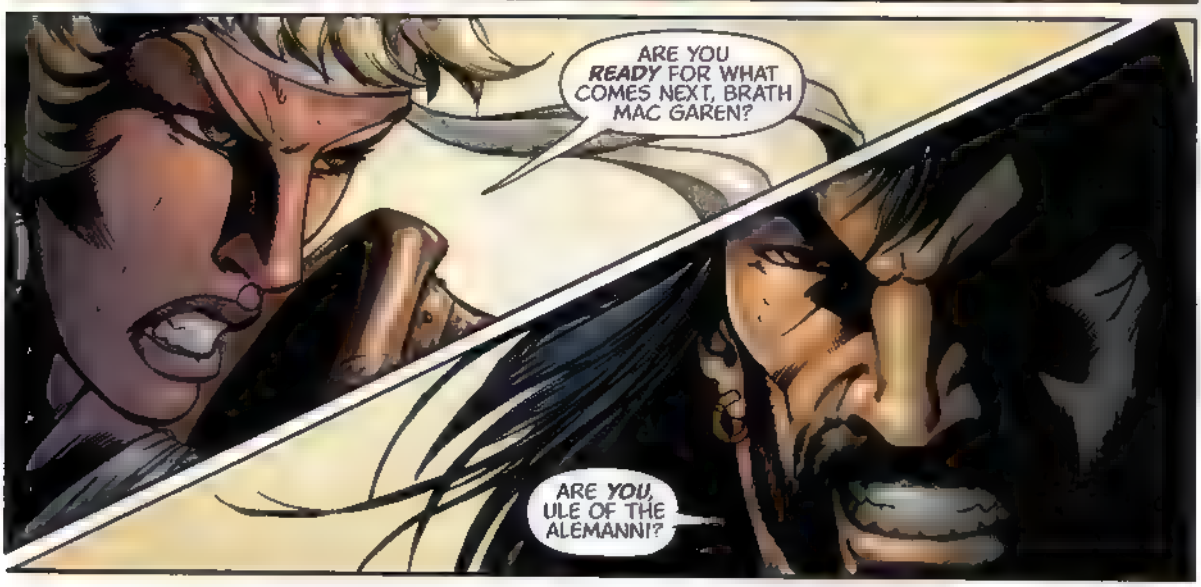
"THEY DEMAND ENTERTAINMENT, TABAS."
AND YOU AND I MUST PERFORM--
--THOUGH IT KILL US!
FIGHT HARD, ULE!
FOR THIS TO WORK, YOU MUST LIVE.
I NEED NO INSTRUCTION, URELANDER!
"LOOK UPON THEM--"

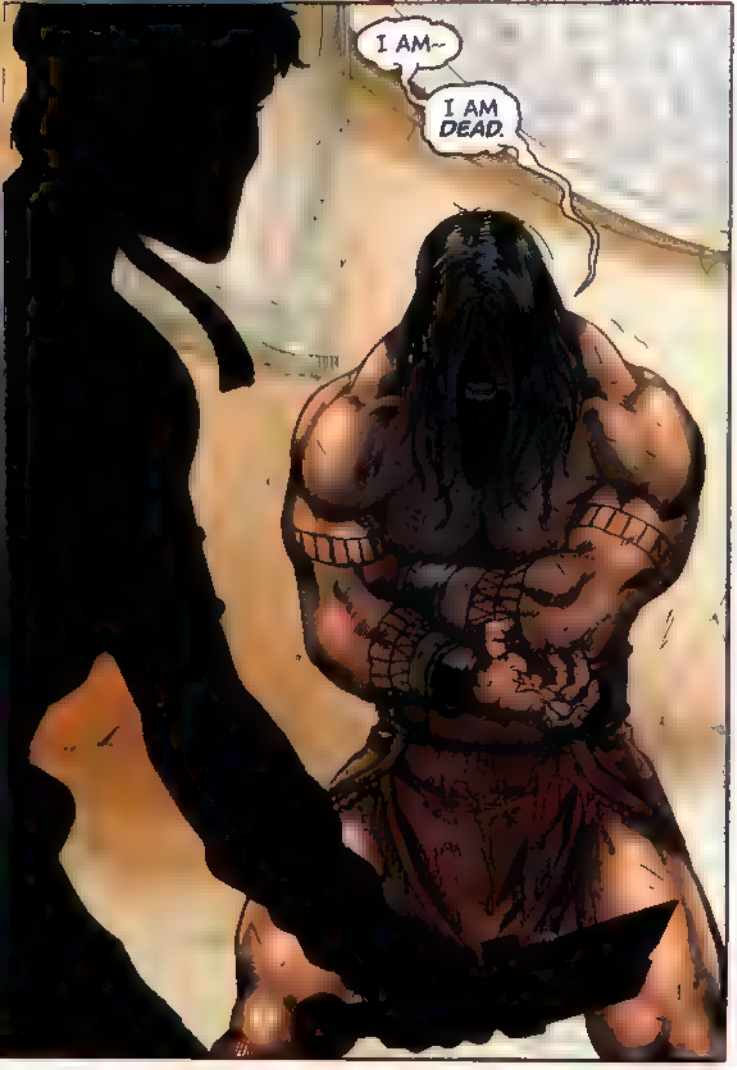
~MAN AND WOMAN *TOGETHER* IN THE INTIMACY OF DEATH.

AND ONLY *ONE* BEING OF THESE *THOUSANDS* KNOWS THE OUTCOME!

ONLY *ONE* HAS THE POWER--

--OF A *GOD.*


ARE YOU READY FOR WHAT COMES NEXT, BRATH MAC GAREN?
ARE YOU, ULE OF THE ALEMANNI?

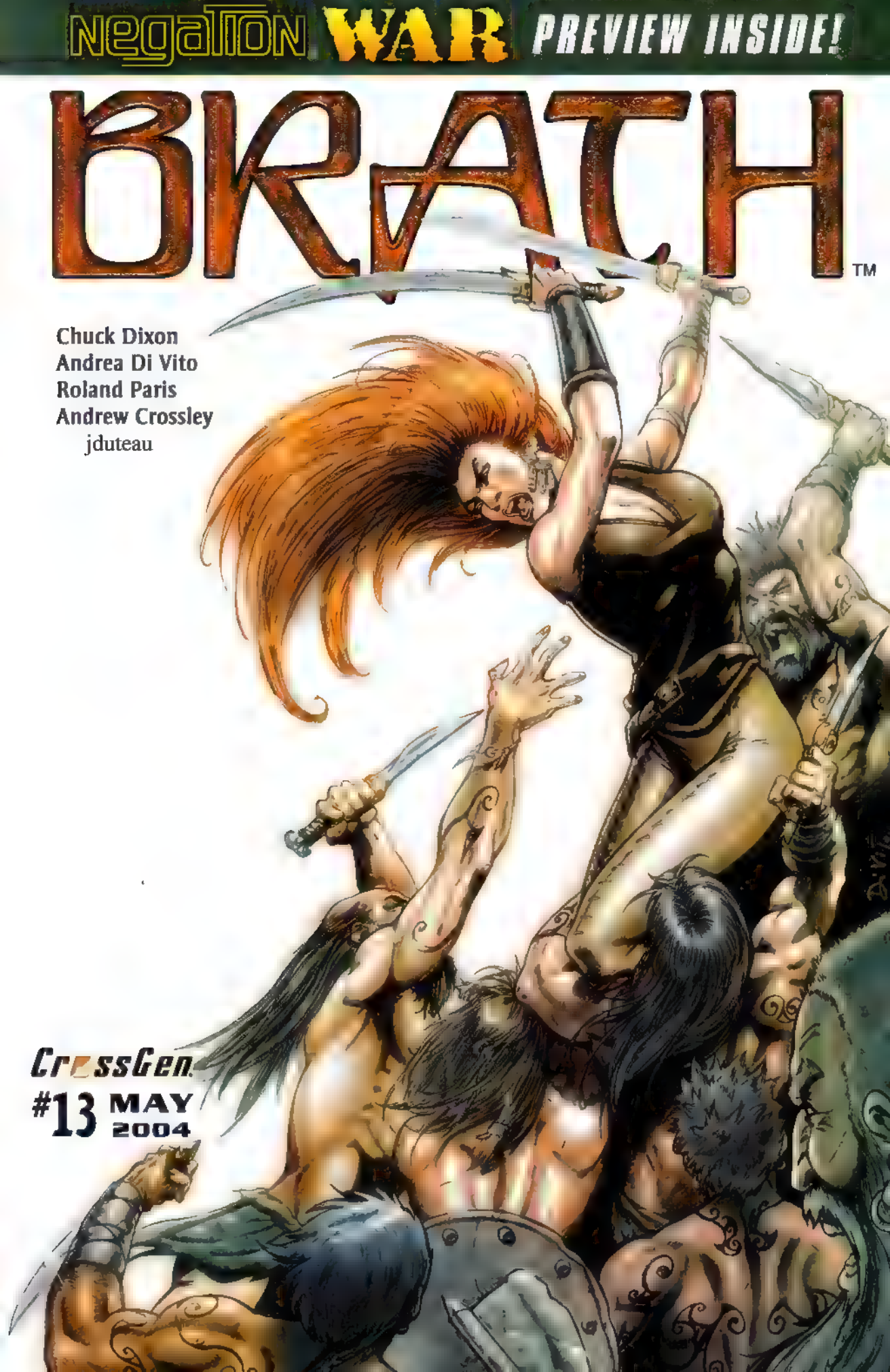

I AM~
I AM DEAD.

SO~ BEAUTIFUL.

Negation WAR PREVIEW INSIDE!

BRATH™

Chuck Dixon
Andrea Di Vito
Roland Paris
Andrew Crossley
jduteau



CrossGen
#13 MAY 2004

PREVIOUSLY IN BRATH

From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe, the world is ruled by the emperor Gaius Metallus Priscus Deius Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. Only the gods sit in judgment of his august presence.

One land and one people remain beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the throne of the great Priscus Rex. Once led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen have been devastated on the battlefield by the Emperor's legions.

Brath has been slain in the arena in the Imperial Capital. Back in Ureland, Tani rides for vengeance against the Cruithi for the murder of her son.

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-UNNH!-
H'NAGTH!

TANI! THERE ARE STILL TWO LEFT!

THEN TWO MORE WILL GO TO THEIR DEVIL THIS MORN!

ANY THAT STAND BETWEEN ME AND THE WITCH C'INNTRA--

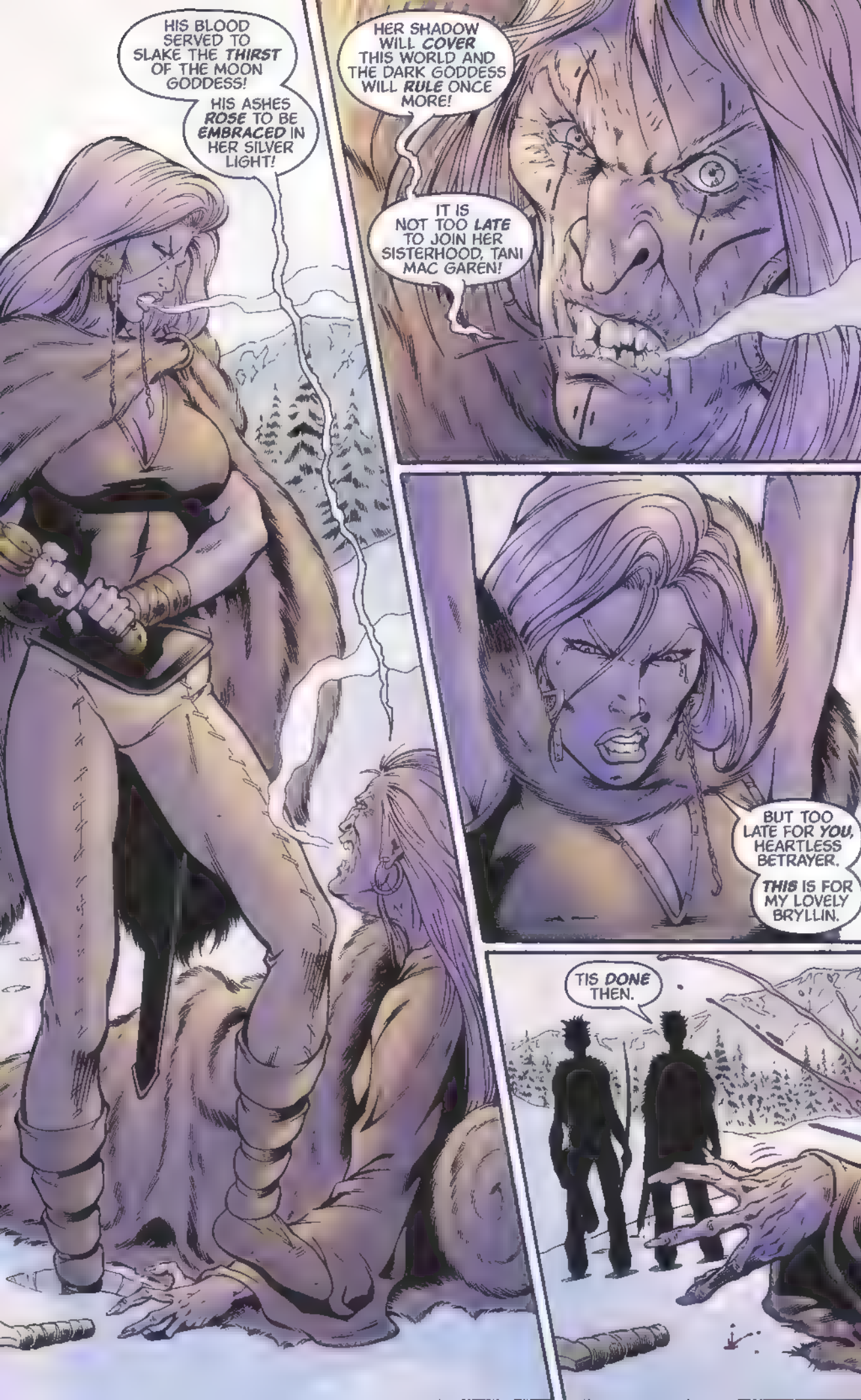
--UH!--

--ARE AS GOOD AS SLAIN!

BE THEY TWO--

--OR TWO HUNDRED!

YOU BLOCKED MY SHOT, COUSIN!
THAT'S ONE FOR EACH OF US, BUCKIE.
C'INNTRA!
AGGGGH!
YOU'RE DEFENSELESS, OLD CRONE.
AS DEFENSELESS AS THE WEE BOY YOU MURDERED.
SACRIFICED, TANI MAC GAREN!


HIS BLOOD SERVED TO SLAKE THE THIRST OF THE MOON GODDESS!
HIS ASHES ROSE TO BE EMBRACED IN HER SILVER LIGHT!
HER SHADOW WILL COVER THIS WORLD AND THE DARK GODDESS WILL RULE ONCE MORE!
IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO JOIN HER SISTERHOOD, TANI MAC GAREN!
BUT TOO LATE FOR YOU, HEARTLESS BETRAYER.
THIS IS FOR MY LOVELY BRYLLIN.
TIS DONE THEN.

AND WHAT IS *NEXT?*

THE MAC GARENS ENSLAVED AND *FRIENDLESS* BRATH TAKEN TO THE IMPERIAL CITY IN *CHAINS.*

WHAT ARE WE TO *DO,* TANI?

I KNOW NOT.

I *CARE* NOT.

"MY ONLY THOUGHT WAS TO *AVENGE* MY SON.

"MY LIFE HAS NO *PURPOSE* BEYOND THAT.

"NOW HIS SLAYER LIES *LIFELESS.*

"AND STILL MY HEART IS *EMPTY.*

"AND MY EVERY WAKING THOUGHT AND EVERY SLUMBERING DREAM WILL BE OF *BRYLLIN.*

"DEATH HAS *TAKEN* HIM FROM ME."

"AND DEATH'S GRIP IS FOREVER."
FOR THE BOATMAN?
NOT FOR THE ONE I SEEK.
THIS IS FAR GREATER THAN THE USUAL SUM.
I AM BUYING MORE THAN A SIMPLE CREMATION.
I AM BUYING YOUR SILENCE
UH?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? IT IS AN ILL OMEN TO TOUCH THE DEAD!
THEN I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
GODS AND DEMONS!
YOU CERTAINLY STINK LIKE THE DEAD, BRATH.
ANYONE WOULD REEK OF DEATH, ULE--

~SEWN IN A BAG FOR MOST OF THE DAY WITH A BLOODY *PIG'S* BLADDER.
YOUR RUSE WORKED *PERFECTLY*. NO ONE *QUESTIONED* MY DEATH IN THE ARENA.
WE'VE NO *TIME* FOR BATHING. YOU MUST GO AS YOU *ARE*.
AND *YOU*. FORGET WHAT YOU HAVE *SEEN*.
RECORD IT AS A *ROUTINE* CREMATION.
AS YOU *SAY*. YOU BUY MY *SILENCE*.
AND *DEARLY* PAID FOR.
DO NOT MAKE ME *REGRET* LEAVING YOU ALIVE.
WORRY *NOT*. IT IS A *WORTHY* SUM
BUT I KNOW ONE WHO WILL PAY FAR *MORE*
HEH.

WE ARE FREE, ULE, BUT FOR HOW LONG?
YOUR FACE IS KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE--ON COINS AND PLACARDS
AS IS YOURS, BRATH
THEN HOW MAY WE PUT MILES BETWEEN US AND THIS CITY OF MADNESS?
ALL HAS BEEN ARRANGED. WE GO WHERE THEY CANNOT FOLLOW
TO OSTIA!
AND FROM THERE THE OPEN SEA!

NOT DEAD?
AND MY LOVELY ULE HAS GONE WITH HIM?
YES, MY DIETY. I THOUGHT TO WARN YOU OF--
STRANGLE HIM, VULPUS.
BUT I HAVE BROUGHT YOU--
BAD NEWS. I HATE BAD NEWS.
MY DIETY--
NOW, VULPUS.
:NNGGGHHHH:
WHERE MIGHT THEY HAVE FLED? THEY KNOW THAT I WILL HAVE THE ROADS WATCHED.
BY SEA! THEY WILL FLEE BY SHIP!
FATHER MY GUARDS AND HEAD TO THE PORT AT OSTIA.
IMMEDIATELY, PRISCUS REX?
:GHHK:
AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED STRANGLING THIS WRETCH, VULPUS.

NO--NOT GOOD--BAD OMENS
THERE IS A GROWTH HERE AND THE LIVER IS GRAYISH
THE TIDINGS ARE NOT GOOD
AND WHAT ABOUT SAILING ON THE MORROW?
TROUBLING. VERY TROUBLING.
I PROMISED THIS LOT TO HISPALIS BY THE THIRD MONTH
YOU CANNOT SAIL IN THE FACE OF THE PROMISED WRATH OF FATE, ORESTES.
I ASK YOU, WHAT NEW MISFORTUNE HEADS MY WAY THIS DAY?

HYAH!
CLEAR THE WAY!
YOU THERE! WHAT BOAT IS NEXT TO PUT FOR SEA?
IT WAS TO BE MINE, OUTLANDER
BUT THE PORTENTS PROVED FOUL, SO WE WILL BE MOORED A FEW MORE DAYS.
DOES THIS OUTWEIGH THOSE PORTENTS, SAILOR?
BY SHAPASH!
GATHER THE OARSMEN! WE SAIL WITHIN THE HOUR!
FOR THIS SUM I WOULD SPIT IN THE FACE OF BAAL HIMSELF.
ALL THAT IS NECESSARY IS TO TAKE US AS PASSENGERS AS FAR AS THIS VESSEL IS GOING.

HUH!
=UNNH!=

FINALLY!
TO WASH THE STENCH FROM ME.
WE ARE ALMOST READY TO DROP OARS, IRISIAN.
OUR FREIGHT IS ABOARD, AND EVEN NOW THE OARSMEN STUMBLE FROM THE TAVERNS.
WE MUST BE AWAY BEFORE THE ZENITH OF THE SUN.
OR SOONER, BRATH!
I SHOULD HAVE KILLED THAT RAT AT THE CREMATORIUM!
NO TIME FOR REGRETS, ULE.
ONLY BATTLE WILL SAVE US NOW.

BY ORDER OF HIS OMNIPOTENT SELF PRISCUS REX--
--I DEMAND THIS VESSEL TO REMAIN AT ANCHOR.
CONTINUE PREPARATIONS, SHIPMASTER
BUT HE SAID--
YOU HAVE TAKEN MY COIN. YOU ARE MINE TO COMMAND.
VULPUS, THE LAPDOG OF PRISCUS.
IT IS TIME WE MET BLADE TO BLADE.

HE IS MINE, PRAETORIAN. STAY YOUR MISSILES.
OUR ORDERS ARE~
IT IS I WHO AM THE INSTRUMENT OF THE EMPEROR'S RAGE.
=HUNH!=
=UNGH!=
I AM PLEASED TO FIND YOU ALIVE, IRISIAN.
I ONLY WISH IT HAD BEEN ON THE ARENA SAND~
--RATHER THAN THIS HUMBLE QUAY.
YOU WILL DIE IN ANY CASE.

WE SAIL. I WILL HAVE NO PART IN IMPERIAL SQUABBLES.
BAAL'S EYE!
YOU DID NOT QUESTION OUR URGENCY WHEN I PAID YOU.
YOU WILL REMAIN UNTIL BRATH AND I BOARD.
THIS IS NONE OF MY AFFAIR, EREMANNI!
PRAETORIANS, EH?
PAMPERED PALACE PETS!
YOU'D NOT LAST A HEARTBEAT IN THE FORESTS OF MY HOMELAND!

I WATCHED YOU FROM THE STANDS, IRISIAN.
I KNOW YOUR EVERY MOVE.
I STUDIED YOU WITH A PRACTICED EYE.
THEN PERHAPS YOU RECALL~
~THIS ONE!
=HURRGH!=
CUT THE CABLES!
WE'LL SPLICE NEW ONES!
SO THAT IS HOW IT IS TO BE?
NO GRAND STYLE OR SHOW.

JUST COLD MURDER.
THEN I AM YOUR--
CAN YOU NOT HEAR THE MOB ROAR, VULPUS?
GUH--?
ULE! ENOUGH SLAUGHTER!
WHY LEAVE ONE OF THESE PIGS ALIVE WHEN WE LEAVE THIS PLACE?
BECAUSE OUR BOAT HAS ALREADY LEFT!
AND ONCE THEY SET OARS, WE'VE NO PRAYER OF CATCHING THEM

NEVER TRUST A PHOENICIAN.
NEVER ONE YOU PAID IN ADVANCE
MY FRIENDS! SO PLEASED YOU COULD JOIN US!
YOU LYING~
I AM A MERCHANT, NOT A WARRIOR

I HAVE STOPPED THE FLOW OF BLOOD, VULPUS.
BUT YOU MUST SEE A PHYSICIAN ELSE--
TO HADES WITH YOUR ATTENTIONS!
WE MUST SET SAIL OURSELVES AND CATCH THE IRISIAN AND HIS EREMANNI WITCH.
WE ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO CONTINUE PURSUIT.
WE MUST RETURN TO THE IMPERIAL CITY AND GAIN ORDERS FROM--
AND LET THOSE DOGS SLIP BEYOND THE HORIZON AND BE GONE?
PERHAPS YOU WISH TO RETURN AND FACE THE DISAPPROVAL OF PRISCUS!
I SUGGEST INSTEAD THAT YOU ACCOMPANY ME THOUGH WE SAIL TO THE EDGE OF THE WORLD!

BRATH™

CrossGen
#14 JUNE 2004

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PREVIOUSLY IN BRATH

From the searing deserts of Bythirium to the cold wastes of the Tandar Steppe, the world is ruled by the emperor Gaius Metallus Priscus Deius Rex. His legions march upon thousands of miles of roads to enforce his will. His fortresses and walls bind foreign lands to his aegis. Only the gods sit in judgment of his august presence.

One land and one people remain beyond his grasp, the clans of the Urelanders. These wild men and women who eke an existence from the vast marshes and unforgiving highlands continue to defy the throne of the great Priscus Rex. Once led by a man called Bradmanacus by his enemies and Brath Mac Garen by his clansmen, the warriors of Dun Garen have been devastated on the battlefield by the Emperor's legions.

Having faked his own death in the arena, Brath now fights his way home to Ureland. Tani continues her vengeance against the Cruithi in the mistaken belief that her son was murdered by them in a ritual sacrifice

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FROM THE CAUDEX CRUTINII OF FLAVIUS METALLA

A SAVAGE AND CRUDE PEOPLE THE CRUTINII EXIST IN SMALL WANDERING BANDS IN THE LANDS OF IRISIA FAR NORTH OF ANY CIVILIZED SETTLEMENTS OR LEGION FORTS CALLED THE CRUITHI BY THE MORE ORGANIZED BARBARIAN CLANS THESE BESTIAL BEINGS BEAR LITTLE RESEMBLANCE IN APPEARANCE OR ACTION TO THE MAGARRI OR MAGDHULI OR EVEN THE LOW HAINII

LITTLE IS KNOWN OF THE CRUTINI EXCEPT THAT THEY WORSHIP A GODDESS WHOM THEY BELIEVE RESIDES IN THE SHADOWS OF THE SURFACE OF THE MOON. THEY PERFORM RITUAL SACRIFICE OF HUMANS AS WELL AS ANIMALS IN SERVICE OF THIS DEITY. IT IS ALSO SUSPECTED THAT THEY CONSUME THE FLESH OF ANY HUMAN BEING UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO FALL INTO THEIR GRASP.

DOTH!
DOTH!
DOTH MARG'HALO, MAGHURLIN MARG DUNNAH EST!
DOTH MARG'ALO! EEEEE!
BANDU. SISTH. MATTAT.
BAE CUNNEN MERO EST M'IT. FINNEN KEIF!
UYE!

CRUITHI, ALL RIGHT.
YOU CAN SMELL THEM BEFORE YOU SEE THEM.
A HUNTING PARTY FROM THE LOOK, TANI.
THEN THERE IS A CAMP NEARBY. MORE OF THE DOGS.
IT'S NOT LIKELY THEY WERE THE SAME WHO MURDERED BRYLLIN, COUSIN.
WHAT DOES THAT MATTER, BUCKIE? THEY ARE CRUITHI AND SO MUST DIE.
I HAVE NOTHING TO RETURN TO. NO HOME. NO PURPOSE IN THIS LIFE---

"--BUT TO PUNISH THOSE WHO KILLED MY SON."
MM.
UH?

OW!
STUPID, STUPID BRYLLIN!
RIGHT INTO A DEER TRAP LIKE A STUPID--
--FAWN

ME BE *THUTE*

ME BE *LOST.*

YOU LITTLE MAN. LITTLE LITTLE MAN.

WHAT CLAN ARE YOU FROM?

NO CLAN! THUTE IS OF *NO* CLAN!

MAYBE WE HELP ONE ANOTHER, EH?

LITTLE LITTLE MAN *HELP* THUTE

THUTE DEEP IN HOLE *MANY* SUNS

THUTE VERY *HUNGRY*

YOU FAST, LITTLE LITTLE MAN.
HUNH!
NOWHERE TO RUN IN HOLE, LITTLE LITTLE MAN.
ARRRRRRRR!

LITTLE LITTLE MAN HURT THUTE!
LISTEN TO ME, THUTE!
YOU MIGHT EAT ME AND FILL YOUR BELLY
BUT FOR HOW LONG?
LITTLE LITTLE MAN MAKE GOOD FOOD
AFTER A FEW DAYS YOU'LL ONLY BE HUNGRY AGAIN.
WOULDN'T YOU RATHER ESCAPE FROM THE HOLE?
IF YOU WERE TO HELP ME TO THE TOP, I COULD THEN FREE YOU.
YOU MUST TRUST ME.
HRMMM--
UNNH!

AGHK!
UH!
NOW YOU HELP THUTE GET OUT OF HOLE.
UM...
LITTLE LITTLE MAN?

GIANT FOOL EXPECTS ME TO HELP HIM.
PROBABLY EAT ME AS SOON AS HE IS CLEAR OF THE PIT
OH
THE CRUITHI FOUND MY TRAIL.
THEY WILL NOT GIVE UP THE HUNT FOR ME.
THEY WILL SURELY FIND THUTE IN THAT PIT.
HE'LL BE AS HELPLESS AS A LAMB TRAPPED DOWN THERE.
AND I GAVE MY WORD
UR?

CLIMB UP THE VINES!
QUICKLY! THERE ARE MEN COMING!
MEN?
MEN DIG PIT!
MEN TRAP THUTE!
HURRY HURRY
DEVIL'S LUCK!
MARG'HALO MAGHURUN!
MARG'HALO!

MARG'HALO YOURSELVES!
GLASTA! OMAP'HA NOD!
UNKH!
AI!
A'DHEL 'THAL MAGHURUN MULUVAN!
UHHHH
D'THOTGA!

LITTLE MEN TRAP THUTE!

LITTLE MEN HUNT THUTE!

LITTLE MEN NO KILL THUTE!

THUTE KILL LITTLE MEN!

GODS OF THE SKIES--

LITTLE LITTLE MAN SAVE THUTE.

LITTLE LITTLE MAN FRIEND OF THUTE.

"THUTE NEVER FORGET."
ALL *DEAD.*
THAT HUNTING PARTY WILL RETURN TO FIND THEIR CLAN NO LONGER *EXISTS*, BUCKIE.
CAN'T HELP BUT *PITY* THEM. EVEN IF THEY *ARE* CRUITHI.
AT LEAST THERE WERE NO *CHILDREN* HERE, DER.
AND WHAT IF THERE *WERE?*

THEY WOULD ONLY GROW TO BECOME MURDERING *VERMIN* LIKE THEIR SIRES.
DO YOU THINK THEY WOULD SHOW *YOU* MERCY, DER? WOULD THEY SHED A TEAR UPON *YOUR* GRAVE, BUCKIE?
THE WORLD WILL BE *SWEETER* AND THE GODS MOST *INDIFFERENT*~
~THE DAY THE LAST *DROPS* OF CRUITHI BLOOD DRY ON THE SOIL OF URELAND.
THE HUNTING PARTY WENT *SOUTH*.
PERHAPS WE WILL *MEET* THEM ON THEIR WAY BACK.
"YOUR DARK OMENS PROVE IN *ERROR*, MERCHANT."

THE SEA IS ***CALM*** AND SKY IS ***CLEAR*** OF STORM OR LIGHTNING.

THERE IS ***NAUGHT*** TO KEEP US FROM IBERIA'S SHORES THIS DAY.

SO, ***LIGHTEN*** YOUR BURDEN OF WORRIES, ORESTES.

YOU BOGTROTTING URELANDERS KNOW ***LITTLE*** OF THE SEA.

ALWAYS THERE IS DANGER UNSEEN AND UNBIDDEN, BRATH MAC GAREN.

AND NOT INFREQUENTLY, IT COMES WITHOUT ***WARNING***.

LOOK YOU ***THERE***, URELANDER!

DEVIL'S LUCK.

AN IMPERIAL ***TRIREME!***

A ***CUPFUL*** OF THAT DAMNABLE HELLENIC FIRE LANDS ON OUR DECK AND WE'RE ***ABLAZE!***

OUTRUN THEM.

THEY'VE THREE TIMES THE OARSMEN ON ONE DECK THAT I'VE GOT IN MY WHOLE CREW!
IT IS A MATTER OF MOMENTS UNTIL THEY PULL WITHIN RANGE OF US WITH THEIR ACCURSED CATAPULT!
HAD I A HECTARE OF SAIL ON MY MAST I'D NEVER PUT MORE THAN A HALF LEAGUE OF WATER BETWEEN US!
WHO WISHES US DEAD THAT WOULD ROUSE A WARSHIP FOR TWO RUNAWAY GLADIATORS?
WE BOTH KNOW WHO, BRATH--
"--THE EMPEROR'S CATSPAW--
"--VULPUS."
CIAO!